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The Methodist Pulpit

Magnetism of the Cross



Polemus H. Swift

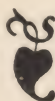
Magnetism of the Cross

Sermons preached in Wesley Methodist
Episcopal Church, Chicago

By

POLEMUS HAMILTON SWIFT, D. D., PH. D.

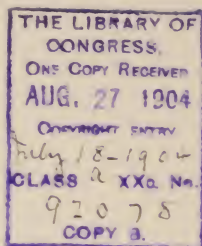
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To My Wife

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I

THE MAGNETISM OF THE CROSS.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."—John xii, 32.

WHEN Jesus uttered these words he seemed to many who heard him to be a visionary dreamer, a deluded enthusiast, or a self-opinionated impostor. How strangely they must have sounded to the men who heard them; and how strangely they would sound to the men who hear them to-day but for the fact that they have been verified! "I will draw all men unto Me." Nobody had ever been able to do that in all the ages of the past. Could the Galilean peasant do what no philosopher, sage, king, or potentate had ever been able to accomplish? Does not this strange prophecy prove Him to be insane? Then how extraordinary His method of drawing the world to Himself! He proposed to do it by dying. Could He do by dying what no other man had been able to do by living? Who was He who dared

to make such a claim? A poor peasant, of one of the poorest and most degraded provinces of one of the most insignificant of lands. Israel was under the iron heel of the oppressor. The splendor of her national life was fading out into darkness. The evening star of her hope was covered with clouds in which storm centers of wrath were plainly seen. The imperial power of Rome was regnant in the earth. Greece had gone down before that power. Egypt had been no match for the legions that carried the silver eagles. The barbarians of Gaul and Germany had been tamed by the Mistress of the Seven Hills. The East had trembled beneath the tread of the armies that could not be resisted. What could Israel do? She had no literature, no philosophy, no poets, no lawgivers, and no armies. She was a back number in the library of the world. As a rule reformations do not come out of dying civilizations. Help does not come from those who are themselves in slavery. It was contrary to all law, all expectation, all analogies, and all philosophy that a man should arise in the land of Israel, at the time when Jesus spoke these words, who could draw all men to Himself. Then, the Jew was not one who wanted all men drawn together. He was exclusive, bigoted, conceited, and narrow-minded. He looked

upon himself as the special favorite of heaven, and upon everybody else as the enemy both of God and himself. Surely it was a strange prophecy. And if it shall be seen that it has been fulfilled, then we can not doubt that Jesus came from above; that he was something more than a Jew; that He was the Son of man; that He was the Son of God. Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Why has it been fulfilled? What is the influence of the fulfillment? These are questions of the very greatest importance.

The student of history, art, philosophy, politics, sociology, and humanity knows full well that the prophecy has been fulfilled in so large a measure that there can be little question but that it will be fulfilled to the very letter. Jesus of Nazareth has been drawing, and continues to draw all men unto Himself.

He is drawing the world to discipleship. Slowly but surely the religion of the cross is coming to be the religion of the world. When Jesus was given to death by the order of Pontius Pilate, His true friends and followers could not have numbered more than a few score. These were weak, fearful, and, to all appearances, not the material from which an army could be gathered for the conquest of the world. Then came Pentecost with its 3,000 conver-

sions. Presently we read of 5,000 who bowed to the sway of the peasant of Galilee. Then we learn of conquests in city after city and province after province. Then we read of churches being planted in distant lands; and the tide wave of Christianity rolls on and on. When five centuries had passed away, a great army of more than 15,000,000 were marching under the banners of the cross. When Christianity had been exercising its influence for a thousand years, the little one had become a great host, and 50,000,000 bore the name of Him who was despised and rejected of men. When Jesus had been on the throne of the universe 1,500 years, 100,000,000 were numbered among the followers of the Nazarene. The nineteenth century opened with twice that number among His subjects. That is to say, that the number of Christians had doubled in 200 years. And from this point how rapidly the stream broadens. Voltaire once said, "I see the twilight of the Christian day." Poor old man; it was the morning and not the evening twilight. The sun of the Gospel had hardly risen when he thought that the darkness of the closing day was settling over the world. With the opening of the nineteenth century great world-wide missionary movements were inaugurated and Christianity began to be ap-

plied to every-day life as never before in its history. The result has been victory all along the line. When the twentieth century dawned 500,000,000 of the inhabitants of this world were nominally Christian. They were not all saints, but they owned the name of Christ and were looking to Him for light. What a drawing power the Gospel has been during these last years! The world is nearer Christ to-day than ever before in its history. The conquest of India has fairly begun. The people are hungry for the Gospel. A race is being born, spiritually, in a day. The Dark Continent is eager for the "book religion." The entire Orient is open to the heralds of the Cross. Jesus Christ is fast becoming "the desire of the nations."

Then Jesus has been, and is, drawing the thought of the world to Himself. Did there ever live another about whom so many books have been written? One of the very greatest questions of the age is: "What think ye of Christ?" Wherever books are written and read, wherever the intellect of man has been quickened, wherever the stars of hope are shining the most brightly, there men are thinking of Jesus. You remember that the hero of "Robert Elsmere" said of Him, "Do what you will, you can not escape Him." It would seem that men were com-

pelled to think of Jesus, and the loftiest intellects of the ages have delighted to do Him honor. He has taken his place as King in the realm of thought as well as morals. All agree that "Never man spake like this man," and all maintain that never man lived like this man. Jean Paul Richter writes of Him as the one, "who being holiest among the mighty and mightiest among the holy has lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the streams of the centuries out of their channels, and still governs the world." Men of thought like Kant, Jacobi, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, and Schelling place the name of Jesus on the throne of perfection and hold him up to the gaze of men as the sublimest character of all history. The philosopher Spinoza declares that He is the symbol of divine wisdom. Milton's songs are full of Him who "shall restore us and regain the blissful seats." Napoleon said: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creation of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded an empire on love, and to this very day millions would die for Him." Herder exclaims: "Jesus Christ is the realized ideal of humanity." Carlyle: "Our divinest symbol, higher has the human thought not yet reached." Rousseau: "If

the death of Socrates be that of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." And thus the thought and the heart of humanity have been drawn to Jesus, who satisfies the acutest intellects while he makes His appeal to the humblest hearts. In every realm He is the Son of man.

Every student knows that the Nazarene has drawn and is drawing the art of the world to Himself. It must be conceded that whatever has its place in the center of the art of a people has the heart and thought of that people to a very great extent. The artist is forever looking for the ideals of humanity. It is, then, a fact most significant that we find Jesus holding so large a place in the art of the civilized world. He has been an inspiration to art, while art has sought to present him more fully to humanity. He is the center of the "Transfiguration," the last work and masterpiece of Raphael. The sublimest thing that ever came from the brush of Doré is the "Vale of Tears;" and the "Vale of Tears" was painted to illustrate the words: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The best known work of Rubens is the "Descent from the Cross." The glory of De Bauff is the "Prodigal Son." The galleries of Europe are crowded with representations of Ma-

✓ donna and the Christ-child. What work of Leonardo da Vinci is better known than "The Last Supper?" Hoffman's "Christ in the Temple" finds a place in nearly every gallery and in thousands of homes. Jesus was the inspiration of Michael Angelo. Fra Angelico painted the face of the Christ on his knees. Tissot consecrated his last and best years to the work of making more real the life of the Master. The great masterpieces of Doré deal with the story of the Passion Week. "Christ before Pilate" has made Munkacsy immortal. Plockhorst's "Easter Dawn" has been an inspiration to multitudes of men and women who have been called to mourn at the barred gates of the sepulcher. Millions have all but worshiped before the sweet-faced Madonna that Murillo has placed on canvas. Every event in the life of the Master has been illustrated if not illuminated by the work of the masters of brush and chisel. Jesus has drawn the art of the world to Himself.

And as He has drawn the art, so has He drawn the music of the world to Himself. You remember what happened on the night that witnessed His birth. A band of angels gathered in the sky above the Judean hamlet and sang till earth heard the strain: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth,

to men good will." And the song has never ceased. The world is filled with music to-day as it never was before; and the song is an echo of the refrain which the shepherds heard on that far away and glorious night.

"Peace beginning to be
Deep as the sleep of the sea
When the stars their faces glass
In its blue tranquillity.
Hearts of men upon earth,
Never once still from their birth,
To rest as the wild waves rest
With the colors of heaven on their breast.

Love which is sunlight of peace,
Age by age to increase
Till anger and hatred are dead,
And sorrow and death shall cease;
Peace on earth and good will;
Souls that are gentle and still,
Hear the music of this
Far-off, Infinite Bliss."

Everywhere the echo is repeated. Organ and harp, piano and violin, bass-viol and cornet, horn and flageolet, and the human voice divine take up the strain and re-echo the praise of Him who came a babe in Bethlehem's manger years and years ago. Hymn and oratorio, solo and chorus, are busied more to-day with the name of Jesus than with any other. Christianity is the religion of song. In this

it is unlike other religions. The heart songs of the world are born of the great hopes of the Gospel. The nations of the earth will yet join with the chorus of heaven in the immortal hymn :

“ All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

There can be no question about it. Jesus has drawn, and is, drawing the song and the singing heart of the world to Himself. Not only is it true that He has done that, but He has done more. He has created a world of song. Men do not sing when the heart is sad. Naturally there are no songs for the night. Jesus Christ has breathed a new hope into the heart of the race. He has brought light into the darkness. He has calmed the waves for storm-tossed pilgrims. He has conquered death and brought life and immortality to light. He has delivered men from the bondage of a great fear. All this has given to the world a new song. The sons of men have learned to sing in every night of sorrow, as well as in every day of joy since Jesus came.

He is drawing the world to His ideals. Take, if you will, his idea of greatness. You know who were considered great in those olden days. The

king was great. He who had wealth was great. He was great who had armies at his back, and could conquer provinces and trample enemies under his feet. And the great man had a right to the service of the inferior man. Every king thought that he owned his subjects. Witness the reply of Rehoboam when the old men came to plead with him for larger liberties, or for a restoration of those which had been taken away during the brilliant reign of Solomon. Witness the fact that in Rome there were 900,000 slaves out of a population of 1,600,000. Witness the long line of 360,000 who toiled unpaid for twenty years in the erection of the Pyramid of Cheops, that an Egyptian monarch might have a splendid mausoleum. Witness the innumerable wars of ancient history, waged only that some monarch might increase his own power and splendor. These tell the story of the world's thought concerning greatness. Then Jesus came and gathered His disciples into the little upper room in Jerusalem, washed their feet and said, "Lo, I have given you an example, that ye shall do as I have done. Let him who would be greatest among you be servant of all." That was His idea of greatness. In His thought the weak had claims upon the strong. No man could live for self and be great. And He has

drawn the world to His standard. The greatest men in American history have been George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and they were the servants of the lowest and the poorest. The glory of our age is its altruistic spirit. We point with greatest satisfaction to our hospitals, our asylums, and institutions of every kind that have been erected to save and serve the weak. This spirit which lifts our age above every one that has gone before is a child of the Golden Rule.

Consider for a moment the thought and teachings of Jesus concerning the value of human life. I have already called your attention to the fact that Rome had 900,000 slaves during her "golden age;" and so cheap a thing was life that your dog has more rights than were ever accorded to a Roman slave. So cheap was human life that Pollio fed his lampreys on human flesh that their own might be better flavored; and Flaminius ordered one of his slaves to be put to death to gratify the morbid curiosity of a wayward youth, who had never enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of witnessing the agonies of a dying man.

So cheap was human life, and so corrupted were the tastes of the upper classes, that the great Coliseum came to be the center of interest and attraction

in the city which was called the "Mistress of the World." And what did they do in the Coliseum? It was a massive pile, 513 by 620 feet. Its walls, when perfect, stood 160 feet above the ground. Its seating capacity was 87,000; but it is probable that, at times, more than 100,000 men and women crowded into that inclosure. And the 200,000 eyes were bent in one direction. Down in the arena gladiators fought with gladiators; gladiators fought with wild beasts; prisoners contended with hired butchers, on the promise of liberty if they were victorious, while Rome lustily shouted her approval as men slaughtered each other, or wild beasts tore Christians limb from limb. Augustus the Great boasted that he had devoted 8,000 gladiators to the arena for the amusement of the people. So cheap was human life.

Then Jesus came and taught the divine doctrine of the "Brotherhood of Man," and the spectacles of the Coliseum ceased, not because of the testimony of a monk, but because of the teachings of Jesus. He came and told the story of the Good Samaritan. He came and said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." He came and said, "How much better is a man than a sheep!" He came and lived as a

friend of the poor and the lowly. He came and said, "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then men thought, "Can the life of any man be cheap for whom Christ died?" From the hour of His coming human life began to have a sanctity that it never possessed before. And wherever the religion of Christ has gone, wherever it has free scope to-day, life is a sacred thing. It is in lands where the Gospel is unknown that infant children are put to death; that old men and women are buried alive to get them out of the way; that captives, taken in war, are butchered or enslaved after they have surrendered. In lands where Christ is really known the weak are nourished to strength; the aged are cared for with holiest ministration; child-life is sacred; science toils to lengthen life, and philanthropy to lift burdens from the shoulders of the race; slaves are emancipated; strong nations go to war to protect the weak, and the "struggle for the life of others" is the law of progress. In the light of all this, how true are His words, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me!"

Take, if you will, his idea of character. What system, other than Christianity, ever insisted on the

union of morality and religion? What religion, other than Christianity, ever insisted that the most pious should be the most pure? With the exception of Judaism, which was but a preparation for Christianity, no religion of antiquity ever insisted that piety had anything to do with personal virtue. In the world at the time when Christ came no one ever thought that a religious man ought to be a good man. The gods themselves were not good. In India they were a drunken, immoral, thieving lot. In Greece and Rome they were no better. Zeus was an adulterer; Aphrodite was lust personified; Hermes was a thief; Hercules was a murderer. In Phœnicia, the gods were the impurest of the impure, and delighted in human sacrifice. No one in heathen lands ever had as his chief desire, in the moments of exalted purpose, to be like the gods. That was just what one did not want. Ideals of purity came from the poets and the philosophers, not from the priests. In the time when Jesus came men with bloody hands and impurest lives were on the throne of empire, and these were the chief priests of the Roman Cult. Think of Nero as chief priest; and himself a god, and receiving the worship of a lust-loving people!

Into this atmosphere, tainted with crime, lust,

impurity, and sins of the deepest dye; where morality was divorced from religion, Jesus came; and standing with His disciples on the sunny slopes of the Mount of Beatitudes said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Remember that, and as you call to mind the standard that is set for Christians, even by the world, you will see how Jesus has been drawing men to his ideas and doctrines. And thus in the realm of religion, of art, of philosophy, of politics, of literature, and human life, He has been drawing the world to Himself. He spake no fable when He said, "I will draw all men unto Me."

And now I ask: What is the secret of this drawing power of the humble peasant of Galilee? How is it that He was able to do what no one else ever done in the world?

It must be because there was, and is, something in Him that has never been in any man. He must be what He claimed to be. He must be the Son of God. There must be in Him a spirit that is from above. On no other supposition can you account for the strange phenomena that we have witnessed. You can account for Plato. He was the product of his time and does not seem out of place in his time. But Jesus was not the product of His time. He had no

sympathy with the doctrines and thoughts that characterized His age. He was above His age, and equally above every other age. He satisfies the heart as well as the thought of every race, clime, age, and condition. In a sublimest sense possible He is the Son of man. I ask you to note the fact that His words speak peace to the most thoroughly troubled heart; that they meet the deepest yearnings; that they answer the questions that spring out of our profoundest needs and experiences. Man has ever asked the question: "If a man die shall he live again?" and Jesus answered, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Man is ever asking: Do the powers above care for me? Jesus answered: "The hairs of your head are all numbered." Man is forever asking questions concerning the life of the world beyond death. Jesus answered: "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me; in My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." And, in the light of that revelation, we see that the ageless life is to be the life of home. In that revelation the heart can rest.

He draws men to Himself because He gives what no one else ever gave. He presents to the race a character that is superlatively beautiful, and that is one reason why he has drawn the heart of the world to Himself. What is it that draws the iron to the magnet? It is something in the magnet. What is it that charms you as you gaze upon a landscape bathed in light? It is the beauty of the landscape, and its charm is in itself. What is it in the picture that holds you spell-bound? It is its perfection as a work of art. What is there in the music that thrills your soul? It is the perfection of its harmony. What is it in the poem that takes you back to it again and again? It appeals to your heart; it is full of delicate beauties and tenderest pathos; it is a great masterpiece. You are drawn to men by the perfection of character which they exhibit. In like manner the world is drawn to Jesus because He presents a character that is superlatively beautiful. He is full of truth, tenderness, sympathy, love, purity, unselfishness, magnanimity, kindness, moral beauty, and grace. He is the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, and the fairest of the sons of men. Therefore the world is drawn to Him.

And, again, the world is drawn to Jesus because His life and death brought a revelation of a self-sac-

rificing, transforming, divine love. That can not fail to win the heart. We are drawn to the bird who sits on her nest in the storm to shelter her tender brood; to the wild beast who will protect her cubs at the expense of her life; to the worn and weary mother who carries a sick babe in her arms; to the nurse who watches by the bedside of the suffering for the sake of love. Self-sacrifice, devotion to the weak, care of the helpless, the emptying of self, always win the heart because they tell the story of a divine love in the soul of the actor.

I have never read anything that so drew me to the Grand Old Man of England as the story of how he went to hunt up a little bootblack, whom he missed from his crossing for three or four mornings. And when he found him sick, suffering, and dying, he went back to him again and again, seeking to comfort him in his lonely hours, to feed him when he was hungry; and, as he drew near the borders of the silent land, to tell him of the beautiful home in heaven into which the dear Lord was waiting to receive him. Do we ask why the life and death of the Man of Sorrows is drawing the world to Himself? Calvary is the measure of God's love; it is a declaration of the interest of heaven in the weakest and worst. As we gaze on that scene, we

hear the prophet speaking words that sink into the deepest depths of our hearts: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; He bare the chastisement of our peace, and with His stripes we are healed." Do you wonder, then, that the world has been drawn to Jesus, since Calvary gives us such a revelation of love?

He draws us to Himself that He may draw us to life. He has power to save. He can do for us what we can not do for ourselves, and what no one can do for us. Let me illustrate: Here is a ridge of rocks by the shore of the ocean, upon whose sandy beach I am reclining, while I listen to the roar of the incoming tide, and watch the seabirds circling above the foam-capped waves. Above my head the rocks rise like a great wall. The tide comes sweeping in, and rushes back over the wet sands, until the waves tumble about my feet. Then I change my place. Again the waters surge up to my feet. I rise to make my escape, only to find that I am hemmed in by the rising floods. To right and left of me the rocks jut out into the sea. There is no escape in either direction. The path along which I came has become covered by the rising tide; and now the white-crested waves tell me that it were death to try to escape in that direction. Above me

the wall rises as the line falls for more than fifty feet. I can not scale that cliff. I stand in despair, and look out over the wide waste of warring waters. I look about me and see that the tide has risen above the place where I am now standing. It will rise over the place to-day, and I shall be swept from the bench and be lost. I cry out at the top of my voice. The only sound I hear is the echo of my cry, as if nature were mocking me with her hoarsest laugh. I cry again, and still the echo comes, taunting me with its vain wail of despair. The waves are now at my feet. Now they are sweeping over my ankles. Lost! Lost! Then, just above my head, I hear a voice. It says: "Be of good cheer, I will save you." And then a rope falls down over the ledge. The voice says: "Tie that around you, and I will pull you up." I obey the voice of my unseen friend. I tie the rope tightly about my body. Then I feel myself lifted from the ledge and out of the rising waters. I am dangling in midair. I am slowly drawn to the summit of the cliff. I am standing on the rock by the side of my redeemer. He has drawn me to himself and to life. That is the plan of Jesus. He draws men to Himself that he may draw them to life, to manhood, to character, and to heaven. While He draws He transforms. The

magnet has two powers over the steel which is brought into its magnetic field. The first is the power to draw the steel to itself. The second is the power to make the steel into a magnet like itself. So Christ draws us to Himself that He may transform us into His own image.

The men of to-morrow will need a Savior as the men of this age need one. Jesus does what no one else ever has or could. Hence He will continue to draw the world unto Himself till the kingdoms of earth become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

II.

LIVING WATERS.

"And everything shall live whither the river cometh."—Ezek. xlvii, 9.

ONE of God's angels in human form had been conducting Ezekiel the prophet about the holy city for special observations of the Lord's house. Finally in their wandering they came to the door of the temple. There the prophet saw a tiny stream, which was hardly worthy the name of stream, oozing in drops from underneath the threshold. Investigation revealed the fact that this small beginning of a river made its way upward through the soft earth at the south side of the altar. Accompanied by the angel Ezekiel started on a pilgrimage of exploration. He perceived that the tiny beck was a growing stream, for, as he accompanied the angel a thousand cubits from the city, he found that it had become a respectable rivulet whose waters surged about his ankles as he attempted to cross. At a

fording place a thousand cubits farther on he found that the waters had risen to the knees. A thousand cubits beyond that point the waters were waist deep, and when they had journeyed still another thousand cubits, and attempted to ford the stream, they found a great river that was impassable. The stream had grown to be a mighty flood.

And as the prophet walked on the banks he saw a wonderful sight. The stream turned toward the desert and, lo! the barren waste became a garden. Rich harvests waved their crowns of gold upon the plain where desolation had reigned before. Bright flowers studded the green sward, and lifted their smiling faces toward a kind and beneficent sky. Luscious fruits ripened for the hungry on the trees which grew on the banks of the river. Sweet voiced birds sang the praise of the Creator and Transformer in the branches, and everywhere there was life, joy and beauty. Nor did the wonder end here. The river turned again and flowed into the Dead Sea. You know what that sea was, and the secret of its name. It was a sheet of water in which no living thing was to be found. No fish sported in its waves. No water fowl floated on its surface. That sea was a grave. Ruined cities lay buried beneath its briny billows. The curse of God was upon

it. The traveler found on its shores only barrenness and desolation. But as the river that came forth from the Lord's house ran into the sea the waters of death were healed. A wonderful transformation took place. Life camped in the domain of death. The sea was full of fish, and a band of fishermen built their huts on its shores and pulled their nets in its sparkling waters. The prophet saw that everywhere the river went there was life, business activity, fruitfulness and beauty. This was the vision of the man of God, and he leaves us to interpret it for ourselves.

What does the stream symbolize? Doubtless this life-giving river is the stream of God's grace. It is the tide of the Christ-life at work in the world. It is the flood of the supernatural with which God has visited the race for its inspiration.

The stream of the prophet's vision that brought healing, activity, commerce, life, beauty, and song, issued from the Lord's house. It bubbled up through the soft soil from beneath the altar of the living God. This is significant. The stream for the world's healing has a divine origin. It is for man, but it is not from man.

A liberal preacher once said, "If the race has ever fallen it has fallen upward." As we read his-

tory and seek to discover the philosophy of human progress we are persuaded that man has never fallen upward, marched upward, or climbed upward, except under the inspiration of a divine idea. Civilization is the result of centuries of upward climbing under the leadership of the Almighty. You will find a hundred illustrations of this great truth as you study the records of the past and search for the philosophy of human development.

Two thousand years before Christ came the deadly drift of polytheism was sweeping over humanity, as the sands of the desert, propelled by the wind, encroach upon, and finally bury the oasis. Man felt that there must be some power behind the varied phenomena of nature and life. But these phenomena were so diversified and complex that he was confused and lost his grasp on the great truth of unity, even if he had ever comprehended that idea. Man felt that there must be some power above nature, but feared that such power was consequent upon the existence, not of one being, but of many; one of whom might love and another hate; one of whom might bless with prosperity and another curse with adversity; one of whom might bring the wealth of light and another the darkness of despair. Thus the drift of polytheism set in. It

brought confusion in thought and a growth of superstition. It rolled eastward over the mountains and across the fertile plains and produced in the land of the Ganges thousands of gods and goddesses; not one of whom, nor all of whom, had power to save the race from the darkness of immorality and despair. It rolled Westward and left its blight on the civilization that had been developed in the valley of the Nile; and, finally, worked the same curse on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. In every land where the influence of that drift was felt there came, ultimately, the death of hope.

'Then God spake to Abraham. He was a plain Bedouin of Ur in the land of the Chaldees; but, somehow, it was given to him to see what his ancestors had never seen. He apprehended the great truth that God was one, in nature and yet above it, the source of all, the life and inspiration of all. That was a divine idea given to man. How it worked for the uplifting of the race! It separated Abraham from his people, and made of his descendants a nation by whom this idea was prized, and among whom it was incarnated; and which stood against the prevailing drift as a great rock stands up against the shifting sands of the desert. That idea flamed out in the magnificent revelations of the Pentateuch

as well as in the Ten Commandments. That idea ultimated, gave us the Old Testament, and was the inspiration and fountain-head of Hebrew civilization. Its idea was reflected by, and constitutes the sole religious power of the Mohammedan movement, which in after years came out of Arabia, dominated the Levant, swept with the impetuosity of an avalanche along the southern shore of the Mediterranean and at one time threatened with complete destruction the Christian civilization of Europe. That divine idea was carried over into the system of Christian thought, and became one of the grand elements of power which produced the new civilization that is blessing the world to-day with a better hope and a more glorious light. There can be no question about it. The stream of Hebrew civilization poured forth out of the fountain of that divine idea which was somehow communicated to Abraham as he worshiped Jehovah beneath the brilliant sky of his far-off Eastern home.

Two thousand years after Abraham we come to a new crisis in the life of the race. Hebrew civilization had been tested and had failed. The scepter had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet. The children of the chosen seed had failed to grasp the idea that they had been

blessed that they might become a blessing to others. They fancied that God loved them for themselves alone, and hated all other peoples. The truth of God had been buried beneath the sands of rabbinical criticism and human opinion. Hebrew civilization had failed to secure the sublime purpose for which it had been brought into existence by the Almighty.

Grecian civilization had failed quite as signally. The little country which had given art, literature, and philosophy to the world, had played an important part on the stage of human history. Her wise men had developed a most profound and brilliant philosophy. Her poets had sung so as to charm the centuries. Her artists had so worked as to give the sublimest ideals to the ages. But in spite of all these splendid achievements her civilization had failed. The speculations of her great philosophers were far above the grasp of the people, and had been powerless to prevent a corrupted, enervated civilization from going down into the darkness. The faith of the masses in the supernatural had degenerated into mere debasing superstitions. That civilization had been brilliant, suggestive, and educational. But it had possessed no power to redeem the race and lead man to the goal of the best. As a moral force in the world, it had been tested and had failed.

Roman civilization had succeeded no better. The affairs of the empire were in a state of chaos. The republic had perished in the throes of that revolution out of which the empire had come. The simple manners and customs of the age of morality and faith had disappeared. The religion of Rome was a political rather than a moral force. The emperor was high priest in the days when men as vile as Tiberius and Nero sat upon the throne. The gods of the conquered nations had been transferred to the capital, where they had lost their divinity as their devotees had lost their liberty. The Coliseum became the center of life in the imperial city and the air above Rome smelled of blood. You have a picture of the heathen morality of that day in the first chapter of Romans. It is a very dark picture, and drawn by a master hand. But there is an abundance of contemporaneous testimony to prove that the darkness is not unreal. Life had lost its noble purpose. The poor were little better than slaves and slaves were little better than cattle. The rights of the weak were ignored. Labor was despised. Suicide was praised. Patriotism was dying. Popular skepticism prevailed in all quarters and darkness was settling down upon humanity. Roman civilization had been tested and had failed.

Then a child was born in a manger at Bethlehem. He grew to manhood. He went down to the Jordan and was baptized by John, that he might fulfill before the eyes of men the law of righteousness. When that service was over, the people who had witnessed it were amazed as they saw the heavens open and beheld a mysterious presence in the form of a dove descending from the cloven sky upon the Son of man. And as they gazed upon this strange manifestation, and wondered what it might mean, they heard a voice speaking through the rifted blue and saying, "This is My beloved Son." This was God's testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth. In process of time he taught men to pray "Our Father who art in heaven." He spake as never man spake. He went through life sacrificing Himself to bring consolation to the weary and the heaven-laden, as well as to lift up the unfortunate and save the weak. He entered Gethsemane and suffered more than mortal agony beneath the shadow of its great trees. He stood before Pilate, by whom he had been scourged, and declared Himself monarch of the kingdom which is not of this world. He climbed the rugged slope of Calvary bearing His own cross, where He hung nailed to the instrument of torture in the shadows of a gloom that was supernatural.

He was taken from that blood-stained beam limp and lifeless, and was laid away to rest in a borrowed tomb from whose door the stone was rolled away on the morning of the third day, when He came forth from the dark domain victorious over death and the grave.

In that hour of the world's crisis some great truths and some divine ideas came to be the property of the race. Since that hour men have been able to see that there is such a thing as the "Fatherhood of God" and the "brotherhood of man." From that hour man has known that there is a life beyond the tomb. He has believed in the resurrection of the dead, and dared to hope that there is forgiveness of sin and a divine power at work in the world that will transform, transfigure, perfect, and glorify life. These great truths came to man with mighty power. They gave a new purpose to human life. They created the stream of Christian influence. They called into being the Church of Jesus Christ, which, though it has not always been what it should have been, has exerted a mighty power for the uplifting of humanity. These divine ideas permeated the empire which they could not save, and went down into the chaos when at last it fell. But chaos can not destroy truth. Out

of the chaos they came to mold the new elements into European civilization. They inspired the Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, France, England, and Scotland. They unsealed the fountains of civil and religious liberty. They drove men across the stormy Atlantic to rear in the wilderness of the New World a new temple of hope. They have wrought for the liberation of slaves, the developement of the philanthropic spirit, and the production of the thousand and one agencies of applied Christianity which characterize modern civilization. It is from these divine ideas that the power has come which has lifted the race to a higher plane of life, and which has inspired a grander civilization.

The stream of the world's healing is of divine origin. Only as man apprehends and appropriates spiritual forces and eternal truths will he find power for the uplifting of the race. Man is forever searching for some cleansing fountain. We are ever on the outlook for some force or agency that will bless and transform. Some are looking toward education; some toward sociology; some toward art; some toward music; and some toward literature. These are all great words. They stand for potent forces which have exerted a splendid influence in the world. I do not underestimate science or phi-

losophy, literature or education, art or music. They have been potent forces, but they have been potent only as they have taken hold upon great truths and divine ideas. These factors, divorced from supernatural truths, bereft of divine ideas, have always proven, not only powerless for good, but powerful for evil. The Master said: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Humanity will be redeemed, transformed, transfigured and glorified only as we can touch it with the power of the Christ-life.

Here, also, we come face to face with a truth that concerns us as individuals. You can be saved to a new life, only by the power of the divine. As the power that leads nations to the best is from above; so the force that works for individual salvation, uplifting and final glorification, is from above. "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." If life is unsatisfactory; if it is fuller of failure than of success; if you look toward the past with regret and toward the future with dread; if you carry the burden of a guilty conscience; if your hands are stained with wrong so that you have been unable to wash them clean again; if the highlands of a noble life seem to be a long way above you; if it is, apparently,

impossible that you should be what you know you ought to be, and what you really long to be; if you fear that the gates of pearl will never swing open at your coming, then be assured that there is only one source of help for you; but be assured that there is help. Whence? From above. You must see Jesus Christ. You must experience the throbbings of divine life. You must let God into your soul. You must make Jesus your friend. You must lift your face toward the sky. The forces that transform life are from above.

The stream of the prophet's vision was an ever-growing stream. At first it was a little thing whose waters might have been held in the hand of a child. Then it became a brook, then a broad river, and, finally, it poured its waters into the sea.

We have in this growing stream a symbol of God's method of operation. He works from the less to the greater, from germs toward complex life, from infinitesimals toward the infinite, from possibilities toward the perfect.

When the Infinite would build the world He began with material in the state of emptiness and desolation. Then he breathed on the face of chaos, and brought order out of confusion, and a bare world rounded into being. But it was a bare world. It

must be clothed with beauty. It must be peopled with innumerable specimens of animal life, and, at last, man must come to work out his destiny and climb to the goal of the best. How did God accomplish this work? By the process of advancement from the lower to the higher, from germs to complex life, from the infinitesimal to the infinite. The student of geology reads the story as it has been written upon the rocks through the long ages of the earth's history. He tells us that God began with the lowest forms of life. The waters of the Silurian sea swarmed with creatures of the lowest type. These were followed by radiates, mollusks, articulates and fishes which made their appearance at long intervals during the uncounted centuries of that age. Slowly the Devonian wore away with a steady upward climb in the march of life and was succeeded by the Carboniferous. Here we find the huge amphibians and mammoth reptiles, which stalked over the land and sported in the waters. Then the birds appeared. Finally, in the Tertiary period we have mammals possessed of more complex life; and, after ages had worn away in which there was a steady march toward higher types and better forms, man appeared, the last and noblest of God's creation. It had been a climb for countless ages from the lower to the higher, from the simple to the complex.

The story of man's life on the earth reveals the same sort of history. It is written: "In the beginning, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Because he was a living soul he was possessed of infinite possibilities. But these possibilities were not realized in a generation, a century, or a millennium. Progress has been gradual. Language, literature, philosophy and art, have come only after centuries of waiting and toiling. The printing press, the steamship, the railroad train, the sewing machine, the telegraph, the ocean cable, electric lights, and a thousand other things that one might name, are all modern affairs. Science is in its infancy. The enjoyment of civil liberty by the people had its very beginning not many centuries ago. The reign of conscience has hardly begun. The great truth of the brotherhood of man, revealed to the world by Jesus of Nazareth, is barely beginning to make itself felt, after centuries of struggle with the prejudices and passions of the race. How slowly the light has conquered the darkness! How slowly the Christian law of social life has marched on, while men have forgotten that they had ever heard the Light of the world say, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the

prophets." Surely man has reached his present position only after centuries of upward climbing under the inspiration of a heavenly influence that has been breathed upon him by the Almighty.

This is God's method of action in every realm. When he wants an oak-tree he does not speak it into being and place it full grown in the forest. He imprisons the possibility of that oak-tree in a tiny germ which has its home in the acorn. This falls into the soft soil. God baptizes it with the rain drops, and warms it with the radiant energy of the sun. The sunbeams break through the walls of its dark prison house and whisper to the first mysterious beginnings of life, "Come out into the sunlight;" and the germ hears, and crowds its way through the open windows of its dreary prison, up through the cool earth, out into the sunlight, and begins its long career of a hundred, two hundred, five hundred years; at the end of which it is a great oak-tree. This law of growth holds in the realm of the supernatural as in the realm of the natural.

God did not give you at conversion all He intended you to have. The stream of grace is an ever-increasing, constantly widening stream, and it leads at last to the ocean of the Infinite. If you

have not an experience that is richer and sweeter, fuller and more glorious than it was on that day when you knelt at the feet of Jesus Christ and dedicated your life to His service, there is something radically wrong somewhere. You have not been true to God and His law of progress. If you are not a better Christian than you were a year ago; if you do not see more in the Bible; if there are not clearer visions of truth; if there is not more of Christlikeness in thought and life; if you do not live more in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, there is something wrong with your religion. You have been walking up stream toward the fountain and not downward toward the sea. My brother, there is something better for you than to live at a poor, dying rate. God meant that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. He has planned and purposed that there should be continual advancement, day by day, as the months and years come and go.

The revelation of this sublime truth brings a vision of the possibilities that reach out before us into the ageless life. There is something infinitely more glorious ahead. Like the river of God's grace the ageless life will be one of endless progress.

The march of life is forever and forever over an ascending path, and the Bible teaches, if it teaches anything, the sublime doctrine of the continuity of life beyond the river. O soul of mine, thou art discouraged at times. It seems as though there was more of failure than victory; more of retreat than advance; more of ebb than flow of the tide. The ideal is far above thee. But lift up thine eyes! There is something infinitely better ahead, and the life of the hereafter will reveal an ever-expanding, ever-increasing glory. The stream of God's grace may be to thee now only as a tiny beck. But by and by it will bathe thine ankles. If thou wilt only trust and obey, it will erelong sweep about thy loins; and later on, if thou wilt be true to the truth, thou shalt find thyself upborne by the boundless waves of the sea of infinite love. God gives to everything a chance and time to come to full maturity. The soul of man is the breath of God, and God is infinite. That means progress forever and forever.

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll.
Leave thy low-vaulted past,
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee out from heaven with a dome more vast
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell
By Life's unresting sea."

As we study further the vision of Ezekiel we note the fact that this stream of divine origin had power to work a wonderful transformation. It was necessary that this should be wrought. The grace of God introduces one by a transfigured life to the path that will lead at last to the perfect. The waters of that mysterious river were waters of healing. They ran into the desert and it became a garden. They poured into the Dead Sea and the power of death was taken away. The curse was lifted and the waters swarmed with life. Wonderful, wonderful transformation! prophecy and symbol of that more wonderful transformation which has been accomplished again and again by the stream of divine grace, the flood of heavenly influence, and the waters of the Christ-life.

This stream of divine origin has in it the power of living waters. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life." He came not to found an empire, to promulgate a philosophy, to elaborate a theology, nor, primarily, to give the world a new code of ethics. He came for the one supreme purpose that man might have life; and that he might have it in the glorious abundance that only the divine could bring.

"Everything shall live whither the river cometh." The Christ-life has everywhere been the inspiration of the best. It is in Christian lands that we find the noblest intellectual life. The school and the college, the quickened intellectuality that manifests itself in popular intelligence, the printing press, the great libraries, and the reading millions are an evidence of the life-giving power of this divine stream. Unselfishness lives whither the river cometh. It is in Christian lands that we find a blessed spirit of Altruism. There the strong sacrifice themselves that the weak may become strong. There men are the more touched with a feeling of human infirmities. There are found numberless agencies and institutions which are designed to alleviate suffering. There the Golden Rule is realized as nowhere else in the world.

"Everything shall live whither the river cometh." Conversion is the implanting of the germs of a divine life in the soul of man. The soul that was dead in trespasses and sins shall live again, The power of the divine life means growth and the ability to resist the forces and the foes that would drag men down. It means progress and the final attainment of the perfect. Peace shall live. The soul away from God is full of unrest. Men have

longed for rest as they have longed for nothing else. When Christ comes there is peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." When he comes there will be harmony between desire and choice, knowledge and action, the human will and the divine will. That means peace like a river. He can give peace, for he has it. When Jesus speaks the soul will be filled with a heavenly calm. Joy will live. There is a vast difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is like the waves of the sea. They move in harmony with the varying winds. Happiness depends on environment or the happenstances of life. Joy is like the Gulf Stream. It depends on the eternal nature of this world of ours and moves on forever in spite of wind and weather. To know Jesus Christ, and to be filled with his spirit, is to have the calm of the green pastures and still waters no matter what the happenstances of life may be.

"Everything shall live whither the river cometh." Hope shall live. Before Jesus came hope died. After He arose from the dead stars filled the sky. When we see Jesus Christ, the soul throbs with a hope that is big with immortality. We shall live again. We shall have and know the loved ones in the land beyond the shadow. We shall see the

King in His beauty and be like Him. The Quaker poet has breathed forth not a few of these immense and soul-satisfying hopes in one of his latest poems which he calls "At last."

"When on my day of life the night is falling,
And, in the winds from unsunned spaces blown,
I hear far voices out of darkness calling
My feet to paths unknown,

Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love divine, O Helper ever present,
Be thou my strength and stay!

Be near me when all else is from me drifting:
Earth, sky, home's pictures, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

I have but Thee, my Father! Let Thy Spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace—
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place,—

Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of Thy peace.

There, from the music round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last, beneath Thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long."

III.

WILD GRAPES IN THE VINEYARD OF MAN'S SOUL.

*"And he looked that it should bring forth grapes,
and it brought forth wild grapes."—Isa. v, 2.*

WE have in this chapter a parable wonderfully rich in truths of inspiration and warning. It takes the form of a song of the Well-beloved concerning His vineyard. The Well-beloved is Jehovah, who is speaking through the prophet. The house of Israel and the men of Judah are the vines of the Master's planting. But the parable is certainly capable of a wider application. Truth is vital. It makes its appeal to every age. The wider vision reveals the truth that the world is the vineyard, and that human souls are the tender plants.

The song of the parable is a very pathetic, touching, tender, and sad lament. "The winged rhythm, the euphonious music, the sweet assonance of the appeal can not be reproduced in English." And

yet the translation breathes a tender spirit, an earnest solicitude, a depth of sorrow at failure, a fatherly yearning and a great sigh of heart-broken disappointment that must deeply move every reader. Here is an insight into the heart of God. The lament fairly throbs with fatherly anxiety. There is the agony of tears in it. There is the bitter disappointment that a mother must feel when the boy whom she idolizes, whom she loves, over whom she has prayed, and of whom she has expected much, goes away from home, gives way to the solicitations of evil companions, yields to temptation and plunges into the whirlpool of dissipation and riotous living until her heart is broken. Not only does the song tell the story of eager solicitude, superlative care, and pitiful failure. It also declares the judgment that must come when men have poisoned the fountains of life, put the lower in the place of the higher or prostituted great powers to ignoble purposes.

We have here a vivid picture of failure under circumstances such as made the very best a most reasonable expectation. The song declares that the vineyard was situated in a "very fruitful hill." The soil was the best that could be found. The location was on a hillside called "the horn of the mountain," where the warm sunlight might fall upon the tender

plants all day long. The vineyard had been fenced to protect it from wandering flocks and herds. The owner had dugged it over very carefully by hand, pulverized every lump, and had fertilized the soil to the utmost of his ability. The stones were gathered out by hand, as the digging had been done by hand; and, when all was ready, the choicest vines that money could buy were planted there. And then, that the vineyard might be protected from beast and bird and wandering robber, the master built a watch-tower in the midst of it, at some spot where every foot of ground might be under the eye of the watchman. Certain that such a vineyard, prepared and tended with such care, would not disappoint him; and with a hope that seemed to be nearly realized, he built a wine press in which the purple clusters might be transformed into choicest wines.

This is the picture of careful preparation, tender interest and hopeful expectation. But the owner was doomed to disappointment. For when the time of the vintage drew nigh, he found in the vineyard, on which he had expended so much care and money, only wild grapes. There is the cry of heart-broken disappointment in the words, "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

This sad picture does not belong exclusively to the far-off past, nor yet to vineyards and farms. It has been reproduced a thousand times in the world's history. The profitless vineyard symbolizes many lives. There are multitudes of failures where the very best was a reasonable expectation. The song may have a message for many who have come into the house of God to-night.

We have all been recipients of a thousand blessings, such as might justify the hopes of our friends and the expectations of God. The benefits of Jehovah are numberless. Many belong to the realm of the natural, and quite as many to the realm of the supernatural. We have been created in the image of God. That puts eternity into our hearts. We have power to think, reason, and love. The lamp of conscience has been lighted in the soul. We have been endued with an appetency for God and the truth. We have come to our places on the stage of life in the grandest age of a most enlightened civilization. This is the age of the schoolhouse, the college, professional schools of every description, and educational advantages of every character. This is the age of books, libraries, great newspapers, immense magazines, a literary atmosphere and an intellectual awakening that manifests itself in popular

intelligence. This is the age when science, philosophy, and the Church have brought inspiring truths to the level of common life. To us has been given God's revealed Word. This answers the superlative questions of the human heart. It points out the path of duty. It glows with revelations of tenderness and love. It throws a light serene and beautiful upon what would otherwise be a gloomy and uninviting future. It brings to man the inspiration of an undying hope and points out the path to the summit of the ideals. To the gift of the Word, God has added the gift of His incarnate Son, and His ever-present Spirit. The truth has been vitalized. Power has been placed at our disposal to enable us to do the truth we know. Many of us have experienced what it means to pass from death into life. We rejoice in the consciousness that our names are written in heaven. Most of us have had Christian homes and praying parents. We have had a home in the Church. The sacred influences of the sanctuary have steadily, and yet almost unconsciously, touched our lives with an influence and an inspiration that ought to have led us to long for the best. The Sunday-school and the Epworth League have been among the powers that have urged us onward and upward. Christian institutions and companion-

ships have formed part of an environment that has made it easy to be good and do good. To us have come position, power, opportunity, and immense possibilities. What more could have been given? If the owner of the vineyard had a right to look for choice clusters at the time of the vintage, is it not reasonable that God and our earthly friends have a right to expect to find in the vineyard of our souls rare fruits of achievement, character, and spirituality?

But we have learned by painful experience that expectations are not always realized. As there was failure in the vineyard of our song, so, alas, there is too frequently failure in human life. "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." That is the story of many a life. More than frequently there is inglorious failure and disastrous defeat where superlative success and complete victory could reasonably have been expected. These words, "wild grapes," will suggest the line along which failure is most frequently found.

Sometimes the words here translated "wild grapes" are used in Hebrew literature to express the fact that the clusters have dried on the vines before they ripened or came to maturity. The blos-

soms of promise, the tender fruit of the springtime, the full-formed clusters of the midsummer, all came to nothing. The fruit was blighted, blasted, and dried up. It was found hanging useless and worse than useless on the branches where rare and luscious grapes were expected.

There are wild grapes of this sort in every realm of life. We all know something about good beginnings with bad endings; promises that were rudely broken; vows that were unkept; ideals that were never realized; angels of hope that have been compelled to vacate their places before the coming of the angels of despair; dreams that have vanished with the going of the night; purposes that were consumed by the fires of procrastination; splendid desires that were stifled by the growth of the obnoxious or the inferior; noble aims that were cast aside as one throws away a worn-out garment; tears of penitence that have dried before the prodigal had taken a dozen steps in the journey from the far country to the father's house, and splendid work begun only to be allowed to remain unfinished and fall into ruin. All this means a harvest of "wild grapes."

How many there are who start out in a business career with the flourish of trumpets and the congratulations of friends who never reach any goal! How

many brilliant young people bitterly disappoint their friends who have expected to see them become great scholars! They began well, but their sun set at noonday. How the enthusiasm of some philanthropic workers oozes out and dries up before the intense heat of opposition! They started out to reform the world, but gave up in despair before the first real victory was won. How many shattered wrecks of good intentions and splendid beginnings have been found scattered along the shores of eternity's sea!

It is splendid to start well, but that is not enough. Promises of a good beginning become "wild grapes" on the vines of life if one stops a dozen steps short of the goal. The fig-tree of a certain parable was beautiful with foliage, and yet it was cursed because it failed to meet the end of its being. It bore no fruit, and a fruitless fig-tree is worse than a worthless tree. It is well to promise, but broken promises are a disgrace. No matter how well you run at the beginning, you may not be crowned if you stop before the race is finished. The crown of life is only for those who are faithful unto death.

It is sad to see "wild grapes" anywhere, but infinitely sadder to see them on the barren branches of soul life. The song of the parable pictures such a

condition of failure as may have come to some of you. Years ago there were hours of genuine repenting; the exercise of true faith, and then the sweet consciousness of pardon, the joy of the Spirit's presence, a holy calm and a blessed repose in the green pastures and by the side of still waters. There was the light of a soul-satisfying revelation of God, the bliss of communion, the peace that is born of the certainty that one is being taken care of, and that "underneath are the everlasting arms." There were earnest yearnings to reach the ideals that are presented to us in the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth. The soul was thrilled by the visions of a hope that was big with immortality. There was a joyful participation in the services of God's house and a life that was fully dedicated to the Father's will. Now all of this is a back number in your experience. These things can be spoken of only in the past tense. Faith has died out of the soul. Greed of gain has taken the place of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The spirit of "other worldliness" has departed from you. Your eyes are turned toward business rather than God. The experiences of the Spirit's witness seem like a dream of the night. The joy of heavenly peace has departed. The angels of immortal hope have spread

their wings and are gone. There is little interest in the services of God's house or in the work of building up the kingdom. What might have been precious clusters of the Spirit hang upon the vines of life, but they are blighted, blasted, and withered. They are worthless and worse than worthless. Have I narrated the story of your life? If I have, then there is a harvest of "wild grapes" being gathered, and the end will be bitterness, condemnation, and judgment.

Sometimes the expression "wild grapes" is used to denote the fact that the fruit is of an inferior kind. The wild grapes that might be gathered in the woodlands and on the hillsides were small, sour, and almost worthless. The harvest of "wild grapes" is a harvest of the inferior.

The well-beloved planted in His vineyard only vines of the choicest kind. Does it seem strange, then, that "wild grapes" should be found therein? This strange phenomenon can readily be explained. It is in harmony with the eternal laws of nature, and calls our attention to some awful possibilities. The scientist knows that there are such things as degeneration and reversion of type. If you leave your rose garden to itself for a long time you will find, when you come again, only the common dog

rose from which our better varieties have come by cultivation. Suppose that you have a splendid patch of rarest strawberries. If you leave them to themselves the time will come when you will find in that spot only the small berries that are commonly found in the woodland and meadow. Charles Darwin tells us that if a flock of tame pigeons, with variegated and beautiful plumage, were left alone on an island for fifty years, we would find that their descendants had donned the uniform coat of the birds of the wild wood.

This law of degeneration and reversion of type works with greater rapidity in the spiritual than in the natural realm. We read in the Bible that God created man in His own image and breathed into him the breath of a divine life. He began his career with the Spirit of the Almighty stirring within him. How is it, then, that he comes to be in the condition in which he is found in every land and age? How does it come to pass that there is so much antagonism to the truth? so much disloyalty to God? so much depravity of heart? so much unrighteousness in choice, thought, and life? The power of degeneration has been at work. The choice of sin has despoiled the image of the divine. Wrong doing has grown into a habit. All this has

worked to create a type infinitely below the original. Then the law of reversion has been exercising its influence, so that in the history both of nations and individual souls we have found a deplorable harvest of "wild grapes."

A life that surrenders to the lower and is satisfied with the inferior will, by the eternal laws of nature, be cursed with a harvest of "wild grapes." Every man is in danger at this point. It is hard to climb with steady step to the summit of the ideals, but the best can be secured only by infinite pains and unending toil. The place of the perfect is beyond some dark Gethsemane of self-surrender and sacrifice. The "Islands of the Blessed" can never be reached by drifting. The Koran is right when it says that Paradise is to be found beneath the place where the scimiters are crossed. That means that coronation comes only after conflict and victory. Because the perfect can be possessed only by the one who knows the experience of soul perspiration, multitudes content themselves with the woefully inferior. It is easy to drift and hard to row, therefore, few find "the Islands of the Blessed." Because it requires twice as much time and work to earn a grade of ninety-five, the student is satisfied with eighty. The farmer is content with two-thirds

of the crop he might produce, even when that will not sell for more than one-third of what the superior crop would bring, because the best can be secured only by redoubled diligence. Ninety-five out of every hundred mechanics are satisfied with inferior skill, and more inferior wages, when the world is pleading for the best, and is ready to pay a tenfold price for it. The world is sinning against itself, for it is a sin to be less than we might be, and do less than we might do.

There are "wild grapes" of inferiority in the realm of soul life as in every other. If ninety-five per cent of our students, artists, lawyers, physicians, business men and mechanics are satisfied with far less than they ought to do and be, more than that percentage are contenting themselves with the positively inferior in the realm of character and spiritual attainments. How few there are who make a complete consecration of themselves to Jesus Christ! How small the number of those who give ten per cent of their income to help the Master conquer the world! A very much smaller fraction will represent the company who put God first, the spiritual above the material, and who are doing their utmost to realize the highest for themselves and win the grandest victories for the Kingdom.

The man who is satisfied with the inferior, lives below his opportunities, yields to the power of degeneration and reversion of type, is content with low aims and ideals, and gives up the fight before he has done his best, will find at last a harvest of "wild grapes" in the vineyard of the soul. If this is true, then, if you are not a Christian, you are planning for a harvest of that inferior fruit. Christianity makes possible the very best. To be a Christian is to be on God's side, and that means that one has infinite power at his disposal. Jesus Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand. He is the pearl of greatest price to those who find him. He is the ideal of the ages. He is the only perfect pattern and example that has been presented to the race. His life and death place at our disposal the one power that is able to break the force of degeneration and the reversion of type. If we turn away from the light which He brings, no other will dissipate the gloom for us. "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." If, then, He is not your ideal; if you have not come to terms with Him; if you are not called by His name; if you have not determined to know the whole truth and follow it at any cost; if you are not loyal to the light of that matchless life; if

you are not putting the spiritual above the material; if gold is more to you than the riches of the Kingdom; if you are not obedient to the heavenly vision, then you are living for less than the best, and you will be sure to find a harvest of "wild grapes" when the clusters of life are gathered in. There are a thousand things of great importance which are less than the best. Physical culture is important; a good education is important; a fine position in life is important; a choice library is very much to be desired; money is a splendid thing if it has been honestly earned, and is kept in its place. But the importance of these, and many other things that might be named, is not the importance of the supreme. Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." If you are failing at this point, you are putting the less before the greater; and to be satisfied with the inferior is to gather a harvest of "wild grapes" at the last.

Sometimes these words are used to designate the poison berries that so closely resemble the wild grapes. They were not only inferior and useless; they were positively harmful. It was bad enough to find the real "wild grapes" in the vineyard. It was infinitely worse to find the poison berries growing in that place of superlative advantage. It is bad

enough to see a life devoted to the inferior. It is awful to see one devoted to the obnoxious, the impure, the unclean, the degrading and the deadly. The vineyard of the song produced what it was never intended to. This symbolizes the prostitution of advantages and powers to base uses and ignoble ends. How frequently we find this prostitution of power! The vineyard typifies many lives. By every law they ought to have been good, and ought to have exercised a splendid influence in the world. They were endowed with genius, wealth, the power of a strong personality, position, friendship, and all the advantages of a place in the heart of a splendid civilization. But, alas, all this has been used, not for good, but for evil; not to help on the cause of truth and righteousness, but for the prosecution of selfish aims; not to bless, but to curse humanity. We find this prostitution of power everywhere. Sharpers who can speak the language of incoming immigrants lie in wait for men and women who land upon our shores to make gain out of them. I knew one who was a most ready penman, who so closely imitated the signature of a friendly businessman that it was accepted at his bank as genuine again and again. I have known a salesman to feign that he was a Christian, and consent to lead family

worship, in order to gain the confidence of his host, sell him goods, and make larger gains for himself. In each case you have the prostitution of a noble power, that ought to have been used for good, to the basest of purposes. One day as I passed the open door of a saloon, I heard a very sweet voice singing a rare old song. I was deeply pained. It is awful to go the downward way one's self. It is infinitely worse to drag others down by the prostitution of a God-given power. God had given to that singer the power of a wonderful voice. That power might have been used, and ought to have been used, to inspire men to grander and better lives. It was being used to draw men into the open gates of hell. The harmony of heaven was being used to make attractive the way of death. That was awful. And this thing, in one form or another, is taking place everywhere and on every day. Whenever genius and power have been perverted so that men are harmed rather than helped; whenever we use the gifts of God so that life is shadowed rather than brightened; whenever our influence brings sorrow rather than joy, degradation instead of inspiration, mourning instead of rejoicing, death instead of life, there is the cultivation of that which will bring a harvest of "wild grapes."

And there is something beyond the harvest. As we read on through the song we come to these terrible words: "And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no more upon it." The tender song of love and care changes to one of bitterness, retribution, and judgment. Every failure, every choice of the inferior and every prostitution of power must be accounted for. After the harvest, judgment. That is not a pleasing truth, but it comes to us out of our study of the eternal laws of nature and God, and we shall not be true to ourselves if we do not give heed to its voices.

Every life will be judged according to its advantages. We shall be held accountable for what we have received, and condemned for the failures that we might have avoided. Unerring wisdom will mark with certainty the contrast between the "is" and the "ought to have been." You have read the parable of the talents. That tells us that not only were the servants held accountable for what they

had received, but also for the use they had made of their treasures. We may be satisfied with ourselves to-night, but that is not the important thing. We stand face to face with a question of awful significance: "Is God satisfied with us? Are we what we ought to have been considering our advantages?"

Have we done our whole duty? The song of the parable began with tender expressions of love and good will. It ends with harsh words of justice and judgment. Israel had no one to blame but themselves. And we will have no one to blame but ourselves, if in the hour when the vintage of life shall be gathered in, we find only a harvest of "wild grapes."

The goodly vineyard that brought forth only "wild grapes" was doomed to devastation and neglect. The former was bad enough. The latter was awful. Nothing more dreadful could happen than simply to be left to ourselves. The student of history is pained as he reads of the failures of the past. The world has made poor progress with all the help and inspiration that God could give. Individually, we have gotten on all too poorly when we have taken advantage of every good influence that has touched our lives. What will happen when we are left to ourselves? That were hell enough for

any rational being. It must be awful to be left to ourselves with all the evil tendencies, with the bent to selfishness, with the power of degeneration in full operation, with the law of the reversion of type in full play and every good taken out of the environment that presses upon us. This is what will happen if we reap a harvest of "wild grapes." The Bible speaks of grieving the Holy Spirit until he takes his departure from the sinning soul. Ephraim was so joined to his idols that even God could do nothing except to let him alone. It is the law of nature that failure to use a power forfeits the right to the power that has been abused. If a man will not use his arm nature punishes him by taking away the power to use it. Fish who live in the dark waters of sunless caves are found to be without eyes. If they will live in the darkness nature punishes them by taking away the useless organs. So, if a soul will not obey the light it will be taken away. If one will not be loyal to the truth one may not long possess it. If one will prostitute the powers of body, mind, and soul to base uses, that prostitution will most surely work ruin to the powers themselves. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." This is the law of the present, and it will be the law of the future. To refuse to see God

results in spiritual blindness. To neglect heaven is to incapacitate ourselves for it. To choose against the truth is to take ourselves into a far country where the false reigns as king. The Bible tells us of men for whom a lie had become the truth. I can not think of soul wreck more awful than that.

The greatest failure is that which comes where the most might have been expected. It is a terrible thing to see a rowboat capsize and cause the drowning of a half dozen human beings. It would be much more terrible to see the *Deutschland* go down in midocean and carry to a watery grave the two thousand souls she had on board. It is bad enough to see waifs living lives of degradation and sin when they never had a fair chance; never had a home; never knew the sweet influences of a mother's love; never felt the power of a mother's prayers, and never were touched with the inspiration of a truly Christian environment. But it is worse to see young men and women go downward into the darkness whose lives have felt the thrill of everything that was Christlike. The best can reasonably be expected of the most of you who hear me to-night. The light is streaming on your path. Will you walk in it? The rod of divine power is held out to you. Will you grasp it? The angels of God are

speaking to you. Will you listen to their voices? Doors of immense opportunity are wide open at your feet. Will you enter them? The sublimest ideals of the ages have been revealed to you. Will you make them your own? Jesus of Nazareth invites with tender voice. Will you crown him King of kings and Lord of lords in your hearts? If you will, the vineyard of your souls will be made glorious with rare clusters of character, achievement, and spirituality. But if you turn away from the light; if you ignore the plan of God; if you squander the riches of infinite love; if you surrender to the inferior and the ignoble; if you prostitute the gifts of heaven to unholy ends, you will glean a harvest of "wild grapes" when the vintage of life is gathered in, and that will mean disappointment, failure, darkness, and despair.

IV.

A SOUL SATISFYING REVELATION OF GOD.

"Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."—John xiv, 8.

As THE shrinking mimosa droops its branches and folds its leaves when the hoof beat of the advancing steed is yet far distant, so the heart senses approaching danger and shudders at its coming. The disciples felt that a crisis was at hand. The morrow cast its fearful shadows over the hearts of those who were gathered in the upper room. In that hour of uncertainty, misgiving, vague expectancy, and dying hope the eleven held the Master back from the garden by the spell of hungry eyes and hungrier hearts. They could not let Him go. The past had been full of blessing. They had hoped that their Lord would deliver Israel, and that they would be chosen for some great work in the new kingdom. But somehow, on that awful night, they

feared that the earth was giving way beneath their feet. They knew not what would happen. The darkness was gathering, and they must have light. The fires of hope must be rekindled. The demons of fear, whose dreadful faces looked down upon them out of the darkness, must be banished. It was an atmosphere of undefinable longing, inexpressible fear and soul-torturing apprehension that filled the upper room when Jesus pronounced this farewell address for the assurance, cheer, and comfort of the needy to the end of time. He told his friends that they could not immediately follow Him, but they could trust God, who was their Father as well as His own. That word, Father, came like a burst of sunlight into the darkened room. Philip voiced the yearning cry of every troubled soul when he said: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

Humanity has forever yearned for a soul-satisfying revelation of God.

Man has universally believed in God. Cicero declares that there never was a nation of atheists. Nations have been found without cities, without written laws, without literature, without art or philosophy, and some with a very poorly developed language, but none have ever been found without some sort of religion and some idea of God. The

philosopher has been convinced that he needed God to account for the multitudinous facts of the universe. The unlearned, also, have felt that there must be some force back of nature and life. The sons of men have quite generally been satisfied with the opening words of the Bible—"In the beginning God."

As man has believed in the divine, so he has yearned for a revelation or Theophany of the Infinite. Job cried out in the hour of darkness, when misfortunes like the waves of an angry sea were rolling over him, "O that I knew where I might find Him." Moses prayer, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." David sang, "As the heart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." This God hunger was not confined to Israel. It has been universal. There are some facts in the religious history of the world that must be accounted for.

With scarcely a single exception the religious systems that have held the heart and thought of mankind, no matter what their origin, have degenerated into idolatry. We find images by the hundred thousand in the far East; beneath the mounds that have been opened on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates; in the tombs of Egypt,

where have lain for centuries the bodies of the men and women who lived and loved, hoped and feared in the valley of the Nile. We know that the temples of Greece and Rome were crowded with dreams of beauty, and that grim and hideous forms had a place before the shrines of Isis and Osiris. The Scandinavian temples of the north were not without their idols. The peoples of the Dark Continent and the inhabitants of the Islands of the Sea mumble their prayers and offer their sacrifices to ghastly and grotesque figures which are called gods. Images have been worshiped by men and women in hours of heart need everywhere. What is the philosophy of this universal phenomenon?

Idolatry is an effort of needy souls to represent the unseen and realize the presence of God. Man has forever felt that there must be some power back of the multiplied phenomena of nature. He heard the winds roaring through the mountain-valleys, or sighing in the treetops. He saw the forked lightnings rend the storm cloud above his head. He witnessed an awful destruction when the tornado swept in fury over the land. He noted the phenomena of growth and decay. He saw his friends fall before the invisible power of disease. He felt that some of these unseen forces were hostile to him; he

believed that some were friendly. To placate the former and praise the latter appeared to be an imperative duty. Hence his temples, his altars, and his sacrificial fires. But it is difficult to realize the presence of the unseen. The worshiper, in all probability, fancied that some representative of the force which he desired to placate or praise would make easier the difficult task. Acting in harmony with his fancy he carved images, before which he prostrated himself, and which, at last, became to him the thing they intended to represent. Back of the world's idolatry we find the yearning desire of a dying race to discover, realize the presence of, and to come into right relations with, God. Man must realize the presence of the Infinite. He must find God. That is the need of the ages. Christianity satisfies this deep yearning of the heart. We read: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth;" and when this incarnate Word came He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

The race has universally expected a Theophany. Account for it as you will, man has forever looked for a revelation of the divine. We find this expectation running like a golden thread through He-

brew literature. When a man had sinned, and must suffer in consequence, God came to him in the garden, and, before he thrust the sinning pair from that place of beauty and blessedness, Jehovah gave them a great promise that some day a redeemer and deliverer would come. Moses enlarges on the promise when he tells the people of the prophet whom the Lord would raise up like unto himself, to whom they must listen. Every type and symbol kept alive the hope. Every bleeding sacrifice pointed to the future day of deliverance. Centuries came and went. The tides of sorrow and affliction surged over the children of the chosen seed. The land was deluged with oppression, but the hope never died out. The truth was repeated and enlarged upon until we hear Isaiah speaking of the future as if it were already present: "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

This prophecy of Hebrew Scripture is re-echoed in the predictions of Zoroaster, and in the mythologies of Greece and Rome as well as of other nations. The Greeks believed that Prometheus would be delivered from his chains and save the people from

sensuality. A Roman sibyl taught that one would come, born of a virgin mother, who would restore the Golden Age. The Egyptians had their phoenix, which symbolized to them a power that would bear away the age of oppression and wrong and bring in a better day. The Indians of North America, no matter what their condition, looked for such a coming. As the Red Man camped by the margin of swift-running rivers, penetrated the depths of dismal forests, chased the buffalo over wide-spreading prairies, or sacrificed in the massive temples of the Aztecs, he mused at times on the advent of a great spirit who would break the chains of bondage and set man free from the dominion of the hideous monsters who were the incarnation of the spirits of evil.

This hope of a coming deliverer is so universal, persistent, and positive that we may regard it as in the nature of an instinctive longing of the human heart; and every instinct that is God-implanted can be trusted. The wild geese journey northward in the springtime. In that far away land they make their nests on the margin of lake and river. There they lay their eggs and rear their young, who sport on the sunlit waters during the summer days in perfect contentment. But when the autumn approaches, ere the trees put on their golden robes of imperial

beauty, the grasses die in the field, or the rushes nod their fading plumes toward the leaden waters, the birds, that never knew another home, feel a strange desire to be away toward the southland. Obedient to this instinctive longing they spread their broad wings and soar away, high above fields their eyes have never seen before; across lakes on whose waters they have never floated; on and on, and there, at last, hundreds of miles from the deserted nest is the southland to answer to the instinct that urged them to make the move. Can we believe that God will honor the instinct which he has created in the breast of the wild goose and dishonor that which we find in the soul of man? That is unthinkable. He would not do it. He has not done it. The instinctive longing of the race has been met in Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time the Theophany came. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the mighty deliverer. He is God's answer to the yearning cry of the race.

There is another important fact that can not escape our attention. Every great religion has had its incarnations, or their equivalent. Hinduism has its incarnations of Brahma and its many avataras of Vishnu. The word avatara means descent. The avataras were, therefore, a stepping down on the

part of divinity, or a descent to man. The early avataras were numberless, but there were ten special incarnations of the god. He came in the form of a great fish, then of a tortoise, then of a boar. The fourth avatara was in the form of a man lion. The fifth time the god came as the great dwarf. The sixth, seventh, eighth, and the ninth have an historical basis. The god was incarnated in the form of some sage or hero, who struggled with the malignant spirits, and, when he had conquered them, receded again into the deity. The eighth of these incarnations was fulfilled in the coming of Krishna, and the tenth is yet to come. In Egypt we have a perpetual incarnation. The apis, which was everywhere worshiped, was thought of as the image of the soul of Osiris. In the Lamaism of Tibet we have what may be called an hereditary incarnation. The governor of that land impersonates a living god, and is called the Great Lama. He is always young and exceedingly fair. He lives in a gorgeous pagoda, and receives the homage of the people. When he becomes sick, or loses his youth, he is put to death by the priests, who always have another educated to take his place. In the New World, from the frozen zones of the far north to the tropics, we find legends and traditions which tell us of hero-

gods who came to men to save them from the evil powers to whom they were in bondage. You remember how Hiawatha came, lived, and worked for his people, and how he went away when his task was done, along a path of light into the gates of the sunset. The deifications of the Greeks and Romans have the same philosophy back of them. God must come to man or man must be lifted up to God.

What does all this mean? Perhaps it is a faint echo of the promise our first parents brought with them through the gates that were guarded by the flaming sword. It certainly is an expression of an infinite yearning for a revelation of the divine. An incarnation is a necessity. We must see God. Man must climb up to the divine, or bring God down to himself. This is one of the great truths back of the philosophy of religion. Job was a typical man when he cried, "O, that I knew where I might find him!" There must be a Theophany. God must somehow be brought near to man. Man can be satisfied only when there is a revelation of God, and only when he dares to believe that the Infinite is his friend. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

The theophanies of God outside of Jesus Christ have not satisfied the human heart. They have all failed at a vital point.

One evening I was wandering through the great Manufacturers' Building at the World's Columbian Exposition. Presently I saw before me a guard with a little boy in his arms. The little fellow was lost. His face was tear-stained, and his eyes were red and swollen from crying. A curious crowd soon gathered about the pair. Every one was willing to do something. We were surrounded with marvels of beauty, but the child did not notice them. The dreams of loveliness seen in Italian marble did not attract his attention. Swiss wood carvings and French tapestries were passed by unnoticed. Words of kindness, spoken by the guard or by others, failed to pacify him. He kept crying, "I want my mamma. I want my mamma." Only a living, loving mother could still that cry and satisfy that heart.

Humanity has been lost in the wilderness of this world. Man cries for a living Father. He yearns for a loving friend. The incarnations of the Orient, the deifications of the Occident, the images before which humanity has prayed, the philosophies and speculations that have been born of man's best thought, have failed because they have not brought that for which man has most deeply longed. We are children of God. We may be lost children, sinning children, disobedient children, willful children,

wandering children ; but, nevertheless, we are God's children. In the beginning God breathed into man the breath of his own life, and there are moments when all yearn for a friend. The child heart cries out for a father. If we can not find him we must be unsatisfied forever.

Divinity, as revealed by speculative thought, has never satisfied the heart of man. When Plato had done his best—and no man ever did better—he cried: “We must wait till some god, or some god-inspired man shall reveal to us the path of duty and accomplish for us what Pallas did for Diomede, sweep away the mist from our eyes.” Charles Kingsley puts the truth splendidly in his description of the crisis hours that came to poor Hypatia. She had done her very best to know the truth and to teach it to her disciples, but she was conscious that she had failed. With the consciousness of failure came doubt—doubt of everything, even of the existence of God in whom she had tried to believe. She mused as she pondered the momentous problem: “If there were gods, to know them were the highest bliss of men. Would they not teach men of themselves, unveil their own loveliness to the chosen few, even for the sake of their own honor, if not, as she had once dreamed, for love of those who bore a

flame kindred to theirs?" But the great wave of doubt was filling her heart, and the musing went on: "But what if there were no gods? What if the stream of fate, which was sweeping their names away, were the only real power? What if the old Pyrrhonic notion were the true solution of the problem of the universe? What if there were no center, no order, no rest, no goal, but only a perpetual flux, a down-rushing change? And before her dizzying brain and heart arose the awful vision of Lucretius, of the homeless universe, falling, falling, falling, forever, from nowhence to nowhither, through the unending ages, by causeless and unceasing gravitation, while the changes and efforts of all mortal beings were but the jostling of the dust atoms amid the everlasting storm." The best revelations of her philosophy could not satisfy her heart. These revelations have never done any better for mortal man in any age or land.

The God of speculative thought has never come near enough to whisper words of comfort into the ears of the race in the hours when man has most needed comfort. God has been known to philosophy by many names. Some of them are grand. Most of them are necessary, but they hide rather than reveal, and as far as they do give a revelation

they awe rather than comfort. What idea does the name Infinite bring to man? Boundless extent, incomprehensible greatness, limitless existence, and little more. I do not blame the philosophers for saying that the Infinite is unknown and unknowable. I can not quarrel with them for saying: "Fool, why bruise thy knuckles by knocking on a granite wall as if it were a door that could be opened?" The Infinite and Absolute is not the supersensible and the supercomprehensible. The stoic philosophy may have satisfied the intellects of the few; it never comforted the hearts of the multitude. The teachings of that unsympathetic system may be summed up in the words of Epictetus: "Bear and forbear." Seneca says: "God in nature is fate, is fortune, is the universe, is the all-pervading mind." These words are like the glare of the electric light. They do not warm or give life. The words of Jesus, which present God as a Father, are like the sunbeams that fall upon the earth in the springtime. They melt the ice and snow and quicken all nature into newness of life. Philip was right when he said: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

The attempts to bring God to man by the idolatries and incarnations of the Orient have failed more signally than the philosophy of the Occident. Man

has come to despise the gods and to be degraded by them. He has felt in the supreme hours of his life that the beings he worshiped could not help him, and has become practically an unbeliever, while he has been held in bondage by superstition and the fear of the supernatural. He has come to the conclusion that the beings who could not help could not punish, and he has surrendered to the grosser passions and drifted down the stream to a degradation and immorality that is all but indescribable. The historian knows that civilization reflects the concepts the people have of God. Civilization, national institutions, and individual character have been built up around the ideas of the divine that have lived in the thought of the people. As this is true it were impossible that idolatry could either satisfy the soul or inspire the best.

The revelation of the Fatherhood of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the one and only Theophany of the divine that has fully satisfied the yearning heart of the race.

As I think of God as my Father I have an assurance of love so rich, sweet, full, and tender that it fills me with the peace of the green pastures and the still waters. If fatherhood and motherhood do not mean love they do not mean anything. Paren-

tal love gladly makes any sacrifice, overlooks imperfections, excuses failure when the child has done his best, forgives every penitent prodigal, laughs at impossibilities, forgets the past, and seeks to inspire to the best, as the object of its affection tries to climb to the lofty summit of the ideals. Love plans for the best, wishes for the best, hopes for the best, sacrifices for the best, and looks for the best. God is my Father. Therefore He loves me. That explains Calvary. When I see a Father's face I will hide with joy in His bosom.

The Fatherhood of God means a revelation of providential care. The one memory of my mother is that of perpetual care. She gladly sacrificed everything for her children. Jesus Christ appeals to that memory and bids me think of God as I think of my mother. How tenderly, comfortingly, hopefully, and helpfully the idea is brought out in the life as well as the teachings of the Master! Practically he says: You know how I have lived; you have seen Me open blind eyes, heal the sick, comfort the sorrowful, strengthen the weak, and conquer death for those who were held in bondage by it. All that you have seen in Me you may expect in God, for he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. As we listen to His words about the lilies, the spar-

rows that can not fall to the ground without the notice of our Father, the numbering of the hairs of our heads, and the giving of good gifts to our children, we feel that we can rest in God and trust Him for everything, because He is our Father. John G. Whittier had felt the throb of the Father's heart when he wrote:

"I know not where His islands lift
 Their fronded palms in air;
 I only know I cannot drift
 Beyond His love and care.
 And so beside the silent sea,
 I wait the muffled oar;
 No harm from Him can come to me
 On ocean or on shore."

To see God as a Father is to have a vision that brings Him very near to our lives. That is one of the great needs of the present hour. The trend of a certain phase of modern thought has been to push God farther and farther from man. The revelation of Fatherhood breaks the bondage of skepticism and brings a vision of comfort. Fatherhood means comradeship, communion, nearness, and fellowship. In the parlor of the great house a company is gathered. In the center is a man whose reputation for learning, wisdom, and statesmanship is vast and well deserved. The guests treat him

with respect that borders on reverence. They all keep their distance. By and by they are all gone, and the great man sits alone in the library. The door opens and a little girl enters. She does not tread with careful step. She skips across the floor and springs into his lap. She tumbles his hair topsy-turvy and kisses him again and again in glee. She goes down into his pockets in search of treasures that she is sure to find there. She plies him with question after question to the end of the longest chapter. You meet her in the hall and say: "How dare you?" She laughs in childish glee and answers: "That is my papa." That is enough. He is her father and that brings him very near to her. He may be great and very learned, while she is small, weak, and very ignorant; but he is her father. Fatherhood means comradeship, fellowship, sympathy, and companionship. It brings God very near to man.

When we have seen God as a Father we dare to hope for a tender reception and a complete forgiveness as we turn our faces toward a better life and our backs upon the wrong that has stained the past. There are no sweeter, or more touching chapters in "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" than "Like as a Father," and "As a Little Child." We read the

story of Flora's wandering, of her father's hardness of heart, of how he blotted her name from the family Bible, and then of Marget Howe's rebuke of Lachlan's repentance, of Marget's letter, of the condition in which it found Flora, of the home coming and of the singing, in the gathering twilight, of the hymn that had comforted Flora's heart in the hour of her sorest trouble in the great city. Then we see Lachlan kneel to pray. He begins: "Our Father." It was a new word to him. He used to say, "Jehovah." The new experience had unsealed the fountains of his father heart. He could not only love, but forgive. Flora found forgiveness, love, and a sweet welcome when she found her father.

How the human heart craves forgiveness! Socrates cried out: "O, for some screen to hide me from my past!" The river Lethe was created by one of the deepest yearnings of the human heart. Men must be able to forget the past. It must be forgiven. We are all conscious that we have not done our best. We know that we have trampled on the truth, turned away from the light, taken our departure into some forbidden land and wasted our substance in riotous living. Like Paul, the whole race cries out: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Calvary does for us what

Lethe never could. We know that God will give his penitent, prodigal children a welcome and forgiveness because He is a Father. Motherhood never casts off. The doors of home are ever open. My Father will receive me and forgive me when, with consciousness of failure, I turn from the sin-stained past and go to His feet.

The revelation of God as a Father is the cornerstone of hope. The new life will end in something sublimely glorious. In our sane moments we long for the best. We yearn for the perfect. We look with eager eyes toward the future and wonder if there is a land anywhere where the great yearning for the perfect will be satisfied. I answer unhesitatingly, "Yes." I am a child of God. That is a guarantee of the perfect. Mr. Huxley tells us that it is the eternal law of biology that the offspring must resemble the parent more than any other being in the universe. That is nature's law. It is likewise the law of Christ. God is my Father. The time will come when, in harmony with the eternal law of God, I shall be like Him. I am on the way to the perfect. The goal may be out of sight in the dim distance. I may have failed more frequently than I have succeeded. I may be discouraged because of those failures. It may be a hard fight to

conquer myself and the enemies that constantly beset me. Wrong choices and wrong doing may have sadly marred the image of the perfect in me. It may seem an infinitely long distance to the summit of the cloud-encircled mountain. But God is my Father. When I knelt in faith at the feet of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the living God breathes into me again the breath of the Infinite, and, therefore, I shall be like Him, here or yonder. I am content.

What an inspiration this truth brings to us. It breathes courage into hearts that were filled with fear before. We can not fail. So also it will wean us from the world. If God is my Father I must reveal His characteristics; I must be true to His nature; I must honor His ideals; I must turn away from everything that He hates. If God is my Father, I am richer than words can express. The universe is His, and to me will be given all that I need to enable me to reach the goal of the perfect. O soul of mine, look up and rejoice!

The revelation of the Fatherhood of God transforms service into a delight, and is the supremest inspiration of work for humanity. God is my King as well as my Father. Every subject must work for the building up of the kingdom to which it belongs. Every son must take a deep interest in the

work of his father. If we have learned to pray "Our Father," we must have learned to say "My Brother." God is the Father of all men. The unfortunate of every land are His children. My Father is interested in the redemption of the world. I must be, also, or be unworthy of my Father. We can not be worthy children of God and keep from other and more needy children the light that has shone on our pathway. If God is my Father every needy man must be my brother. The starving sons of India are our brethren. The destitute Freedmen of the South are our brothers. The unclothed, unfed, poorly housed, unwarmed men and women who make their homes in filthy tenements on dark streets and narrow alleys, where virtue is well-nigh an impossibility, are our brothers and sisters. Those who have been overcome by temptation, and swept away in the angry floods of sin, are our brothers. We can not be indifferent to their need and be children of God. If God is our Father we can not say, What is it to me that men and women are starving in India; that families herd together like cattle in the slum districts of our great cities; that industrial conditions are crowding the weak to the wall; that the sweat-shop is destroying men and women, soul as well as body; that lawlessness and crime

are rampant in the land ; that the battle of the ages will end in defeat unless the lovers of right arouse themselves and do their duty ; that the nations are stretching out eager hands for the light and truth which God has given to us, and that the rum power is dragging its thousands of victims into the whirlpool of darkness every year? We can not claim the wealth of divine Fatherhood and at the same time set aside the claims of human brotherhood. Light always brings obligation. If we neglect these duties we shall suffer more than they will whom we neglect. Whittier puts it well when he says :

“The meal unshared is food unblest;
 Thou hoarest in vain when love should spend;
 Self ease is pain; thy only rest
 Is labor for a worthy end.”

V.

UNDER THE JUNIPER-TREE.

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree."—1 Kings xix, 4.

It is evening, and we are in the desert, a full day's journey from Beer-sheba. It is a lonely spot. The sun has set large and red, behind the broken horizon. The air is balmy with the heavy odors of an Oriental twilight. Presently we come upon a man who has been journeying rapidly, as it would seem, during a long and weary day. He is travel-stained, and has a worn and dejected look. There is an expression of terror in his eye, as though he had been fleeing from the face of some dreaded enemy. His whole appearance tells the story of discouragement and failure. He has thrown himself upon the ground beneath a dwarf juniper-tree to rest. Presently he begins to utter a prayer of discouragement and dejection. "It is enough, now,

O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. What good can come of this uneven conflict. The prophets of Israel are dead; the altars of Jehovah are thrown down and destroyed; the hosts of the people are unfaithful to Jehovah; the palace of the king is a den of iniquity and a haunt of wickedness; the fear of the true God has departed from the land, and I, only, am left alone, and they seek my life to take it away. What good can come of all this toil and sacrifice? My life has been a failure. I have been as unsuccessful as were my fathers, who made vain attempts to stem the tides of idolatry and sin. Better to die and end the struggle, and find a calm repose in the neglected tomb of my ancestors." So the disheartened, weary man moans out his complaint, until, too weary to moan, he falls asleep.

Who is this discouraged, disconsolate, despondent man? Elijah the Tishbite. What, is this the man who stood yesterday on Carmel, and, single-handed and alone, won a mighty victory over the seven hundred and fifty priests of Baal and the Grove? Is this he who dared to face Israel's sin-stained monarch and say, "It is thou that troublest Israel!" Is this the man who quailed not before the assembled multitude that gathered on the testing day? Is this he

who prevailed with God in mighty prayer, so that the windows of heaven were closed for three years and six months; and who prayed again, after his mighty conflict and his glorious victory, and the heavens were opened and abundant showers deluged the thirsty land? Is this the one who was strong enough to run before the flying chariot of Ahab from Carmel's summit to the gates of Jezreel? Yes, it is the same man. Changed, it may be, discouraged, dejected, disconsolate, wrought upon by fears that we might not have expected, pouring forth complaint for which we are unprepared, but the same man. There were hours of weakness and failure in the life of Elijah just as there are in every life. His history is yours and mine, with this exception, that in his life there were more strong hours than weak ones; more hours of victory than defeat; while in our lives weakness is more abundant than strength, failure than success, defeat than victory.

Life is full of strange contrasts. We find the weakest hour in the life of the old prophet immediately following his hour of greatest victory. His experience under the juniper-tree comes on the day after his triumph on Carmel. That is natural. The highest mountain is often found over against the

deepest valley. The loftiest wave follows the deepest depression. We live in a world where joys and sorrows blend together like lights and shadows on a landscape. Here we meet a bridal party and look upon faces wreathed with smiles. How bright, fresh, and happy the world seems to these as they journey down life's shining way! To them it is a vista arched with the radiant bow of promise. But scarcely has the bridal party passed when we meet a funeral procession, moving with slow and measured tread toward the silent city on the hill. How dark, gloomy, and forbidding existence seems to these! And so life forever runs its changeful round. Yesterday a rainbow-arched vista; to-day a cloud with no silver lining. The darkest days seem to follow close upon those which are brightest and most beautiful. In harmony with this law of contrasts, the weakest hours of human life are likely to come just after those which seem to be the strongest. Man is a strange combination of strength and weakness. To-day he stands, strong in the strength of his imperial manhood; to-morrow, discouraged and weak, he trembles before the meanest foe. You have had your Carmel-top experience. In that hour you thought yourself strong enough to vanquish every foe. You believed that you never would doubt

again. The great truths of religion had been so vitalized in your experience; you had won such complete victory over the enemy; you had received such glorious visions of God and the truth, and had been so charmed and fascinated by them that you fancied the days of discouragement, despondency, darkness, and backsliding never could find place in your life again. Then you awoke the very next day to find yourself nerveless and weak; without power to do the truth you knew; without a soul-satisfying vision of God; without peace and rest; tempted almost to distraction; wearied beyond endurance; ready to fall, and in sympathy with the prayer of the great prophet, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." We have had such experience in days of sunshine and shadow, strength and weakness, success and failure, victory and defeat, as has brought us into closest sympathy with the life of the grand old Tishbite prophet. Because the history of Elijah is the history of every human life, it will be well worth our while to try to understand the philosophy of these strange contrasts. That may save us from failure to service on some sad day, when we find ourselves "under the juniper."

How came Elijah under the juniper-tree? You

say that you would have expected better things of him. He was a prophet of God; had been called to a peculiar work; had received a divine commission, and had been permitted to win great victories. Well, be it so. Prophets and common people, priests and laymen, are living under one and the same law. Elijah was a man with like passions as ourselves. His failures are our failures. The sources of his weakness are the same as ours. The prophet or the minister has no strength that may not come to every child of God. You are exposed to no greater temptations than I am. It is quite as easy to stumble on the pulpit stairs as it is on the steps of the Board of Trade. Let us not think that we are peculiar, and that others have strength that we may not have. The only difference between us and others is that we are called to one line of work and activity, they to another. Our temptations are not specially peculiar. The strength that makes victory possible for others may be ours if we only will have it. The sources of failure are similar in all our lives.

The juniper-tree experience of Elijah may have been consequent upon a natural reaction. To every action there is always opposed an equal reaction. This law will account for the despondency and dejection of the old prophet, at least in part. A thor-

oughly exhausted body begets a thoroughly exhausted brain; and with a thoroughly exhausted brain the mind can not act normally. Elijah had been exposed to a terrible strain, physically, nervously, and mentally. You can not have forgotten the strain of that day of preparation; nor the hours of intensest excitement, when the children of Israel gathered in serried ranks on the side of Carmel. How the soul of the old prophet must have been strained to its highest tension as he faced the king, the priests, and the great multitude of idol worshipers who were anxiously awaiting the outcome of the test. It is not easy to pray as Elijah did before the fire fell. You can not have forgotten the hurry and confusion which attended the slaughter of the priests of Baal on Kishon's banks, nor yet the agonizing prayer for rain when his soul, perhaps for hours together, was keyed up by an expectancy and desire such as we can know very little about. Then came that long race of twenty-five miles in the darkness of night, with the sound of the storm filling his ears, while he ran before the dashing chariot of the humiliated and half-frightened king to the gates of Jezreel. It had been a day of awful strain, and every action has its equal reaction. When the night had come, the strain was over and the victory won,

it is not at all surprising that Elijah found himself nerveless and weak ; and then, just at that hour when he was beginning to feel the influence of the reaction, the messenger of Jezebel knocked at his door and brought that word of threatening: "May the gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." The reaction had set in. He was weak and nerveless in consequence, and he arose and fled for his life, just as you and I would have done.

What came to him is very likely to come to us. Action is always followed by reaction. Our mountain-top experiences are almost sure to be followed by such depressions as leave us strangely weak and bitterly discouraged. It may be helpful to remember this as we try, with all our might, to live and work for God. Many hours of mental and spiritual depression come because of aching heads ; because we have been watching, through long nights of anxiety, by the bedside of suffering friends, whom we love more dearly and truly than we love our own lives. They may be consequent upon the fact that we have been under a terrific strain in business ; that we have been staggering, for weeks and months, under burdens that were too heavy for human

shoulders. It may be true that for a long time every power of body, nerve, and mind has been pressed into service to meet the demands of some supreme hour. We did not feel it at the time, but the reaction was sure to come. Causes the most trivial, apparently, oftentimes makes all the difference between happiness and despair, faith and doubt, courage and indecision; and it is quite probable that we are nerveless and weak, that faith is at a low ebb, that the sky is clouded and the vision of soul is not as far-reaching as it has been at times, simply because we are worn out from having been compelled to bear up under strains that were too severe for us. God has not changed. He has not ceased to love us. Our friends have not forgotten us. Life has no less for us than it had yesterday. The sun is shining just as brightly, but these unnatural strains have so exhausted every power of body, nerve, and mind, that it is impossible for us to be what we were before, to think clearly, or to judge rationally. In the hour of depression that follows reaction there is a necessity that we watch and pray, and that we guard ourselves and the approaches to the soul in a peculiar manner.

It is possible that the weakness, depression, and fear which we have found in the old Hebrew prophet

came about because there was a lack of human sympathy. Those words of his prayer speak volumes: "I, only, am left alone." There is the gloom of deep darkness in that cry which came from the depths of a discouraged spirit. "I, only, am left alone." The prophets are slain; those who feared God and sought to live in harmony with his laws are no more. The great masses of Israel have been turned away from their devotion to God; they have bowed down before Baal; "I, only, am left alone." Elijah was a strong man, but he was human; and no human being is strong enough to fight on forever against terrible odds, while he is conscious that he is standing all alone. The human heart needs the sympathy of its kind. The moment that one comes to feel that he has no one to sympathize with him, no one to hold up his hands, no one on whom he can lean, and no one whom he can trust, he comes to be conscious of weakness; and it would not be strange if morbid melancholy and despondency take possession of him. I think it was this feeling of longing desire for human sympathy which led Jesus, in that hour of garden agony, to return from His prayer again, and again, and again, to the place where His disciples had been left. He needed them. They could not help Him. They could not push aside

the sword that was about to fall upon Him. They could not stay the hand that was lifting to His lips the cup which he must drain for the world's redemption. But His human heart longed for their sympathy. And so it is with every one of us. The wise man has said, "Two is better than one, and a threefold cord can not be easily broken." Had Elijah only known that there were seven thousand good men and true who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose lips had not kissed his image, I am sure that he would not have quailed before the angry queen. The lack of human sympathy makes men weak. The consciousness that there are others who sympathize with us, who love us, and who will stand by us to the bitter end, imparts courage and strength. We need sympathy. Others need it just as much as we do, and to every one of us is given the blessed privilege of saving some human life from failure if we will. Shall we try to do it? Shall we speak the words of encouragement that we may and ought to speak, and in the day when they ought to be spoken?

Elijah made a great mistake when he came to the conclusion that he was alone. The sun is always shining behind the cloud. God has never deserted the world. Ours are not the only plans for

the enlargement of the Kingdom. Ours are not the only knees that press the earth in prayer. There are other Churches besides the one to which we belong. Others are winning victories while we are defeated. We are not standing alone. When it is darkness in our neighborhood, the golden light is streaming through the open doors in Oriental climes. There is a great army of men and women who are praying for you, even though your face and name are unknown to them. You are not alone. God has an ever-increasing army of good men and women in the world; their triumph is your victory. Take courage. God is not dead.

“’T is weary watching wave on wave,
And yet the tide heaves onward;
We build like corals, grave on grave,
But pave a pathway sunward.
We’re beaten back in many a fray,
And yet new strength we borrow;
For where the vanguard camps to-day,
The rear will camp to-morrow.”

Again, it is probable that Elijah had underestimated his enemy while he cherished irrational ideas of success. Ahab, the king, had surrendered to his mighty influence. Jezebel was altogether another personage. She had come to Israel from a heathen land. She had no sympathy whatever with the wor-

ship of Jehovah. All the strength of her almost masculine nature had been given for the extension as well as the introduction of the religion of her native land. Hers was not only a volcanic nature, but persistently she moved forward to the accomplishment of the purposes upon which her volcanic nature had set itself. To underestimate an enemy is sure to bring disaster. That was the awful mistake made by both the North and the South during the Civil War. Russia underestimated Japan and suffered bitterly in consequence. No great enemy was ever crushed by one defeat. Many a man is underestimating the power of rum. He thinks he can drink when he wants to and quit when he pleases. This blunder will be the ruination of him. Elijah ought to have expected that he would hear from Jezebel again. You will hear from the bad habits you have tried to conquer. The face of your great temptation will be seen again in the darkness. Be not surprised. Be ready for the next move of your apparently vanquished foe. Elijah thought that the campaign had been won when on Carmel the people shouted, "The Lord, He is the God." He forgot the great truth that conversion is one thing and a new life quite another. He was elated by his success on the mountain, and that elation made the

reaction all the more terrible, when none of those who had joined in the shout on Carmel gathered around him to strengthen his hand against the wrathful queen. Had the old prophet known more of human nature he would have been prepared for this indifferent silence. It is one thing to be for God when the multitudes are taking that stand, and another thing to remain at the post of duty when the tide is all against us. It is one thing to say Amen to the pastor's sermon, and another thing to crystallize it into life. Then, again, it must be remembered that all reforms are not the work of a day, but of years and of centuries. Elijah thought that idolatry had been overthrown when he gained that decisive victory on Carmel. It was only a single fort that had been taken. The years move slowly. Great moral conquests are made only after years of struggling. For centuries the seeds of idolatry had been sown in the land. Israel had taken lessons in Egypt. They had come in contact with the idolatry of the Canaanites, and, last of all, the Zidonian queen had brought into the land the superstitions and degradations of her native country. Could it be possible that the results of all this could be eradicated in a day? It was impossible. Long years must pass. One prophet after another must

speak to the people of God. One wave of providence must follow another. The people must be borne away into captivity on the mighty tide waves of misfortune before the final triumph over idolatry could be won, and before the Jew could go into all the world bearing his sublime monotheism for the conquests of the religious systems of all the ages.

Here is a great lesson for us. We must not expect too much in a day. It is a grand thing that we have surrendered our hearts and lives to the man of Nazareth. It is a grand thing that we have set our choice on the spiritual and eternal. It is a magnificent beginning, but we must not confound beginnings with endings. Many a man has hoped that just because he has been converted the temptations and trials of other days would not come back to him. They will come. The half-conquered habits will struggle again for the remastery of your soul. The demon of appetite will spring upon you in some careless moment. There is no discharge in the war for the crown of immortality. The tree of doubt may have been cut down, but another is likely to spring from the roots. The devil dogged the footsteps of the Son of God to the last hour of His life. The conflict against evil is unending. If we thoroughly learn this lesson we may be saved from at least one juniper-tree experience.

Let us not be discouraged and give up in despair because we have made so little progress. Growth is a slow process; it takes God centuries to make an oak-tree. It took Him ages to make the world. Character does not come in a night. The perfection of maturity is the result of victorious struggle for years. Heaven is not reached by a single bound. It is a long and painful march to the summit of the ideals. Do not be discouraged, but keep pegging away. That is the secret of coronation.

If having tried to understand the philosophy of weak hours, we read again the story to learn how God treated the discouraged prophet, we shall come to a very sweet and comforting revelation; and at the same time be helped to see how we should treat those who are groaning in bitterness of spirit beneath the juniper-tree.

God did not scold His disconsolate servant. That would have broken his heart. Elijah was bitterly conscious of his failure. It was not necessary to send an angel to remind him of that. You must not kick a man when he is down. Do not find fault with a man who is humiliated, chagrined, tortured by a sense of defeat, and who thinks he has not a friend in the world. That is to trample upon the

heart of an already crushed man. Note what God did for the runaway prophet. He did not scold him and cast him off because he was weak and had fault. He showed Elijah that heaven was still his friend. While he slept, lo, an angel came to him. Kindly, gently, lovingly, the angelic messenger touched the weary, disconsolate, sleeping prophet, and said: "Elijah, arise and eat." That is all; and then the vision vanished and the prophet awoke to find a cake and cruse of water at his head. Again he slept, and again the vision of infinite tenderness stood by his side. Again the angel whispered, "Elijah, arise and eat; the journey is too great for thee;" and he awoke and found once more supplies awaiting the time of his need. What a revelation that must have been to him!

God did not scold the prophet then. The time came when He did. Jehovah was not unmindful of his failure, but He waited till the man had regained heart before He criticised. When the Tishbite had rested; when he had come to himself; when the tides of power had risen again in his soul, God demanded, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" "You are My chosen one. You ought not to be squandering golden moments here in purposeless inactivity. Get up and go to work." The scolding is all right

in its place; but it is all wrong out of place. Make a discouraged man think he can do something before you give him new plans. You must feed and clothe the hungry before you can preach to them. A vacation for a worn-out man is better than theology. A week in the country may be the very best kind of a gospel. If you find a man under a juniper-tree do not find fault with him. Do not tell him why he failed, or that he failed. He needs kindness, not criticism. He needs sympathy, a friendly word, and a helping hand. He needs to feel that the change is in himself and not in God nor in his friends. Make him feel that. Hold up his hands. Beat back the tide waves that have set against him; and then, when he is strong, when he has overcome the temptation, when he is clothed and in his right mind, when he is rested, when he has reached the Mount of God, then you may correct, suggest, criticise, give him new plans, and scold if need be. But let us learn from God's treatment of the runaway, discouraged prophet never to find fault and criticise people in the hour of weakness. It is useless to say to the man who is down, "I told you so." Help him up. Let the past go, at least for the present. Help him to solid rock, and then you can lov-

ingly, tenderly, and successfully point out the path in which he ought to walk.

What a kindly revelation we find in the words, "The journey is too great for thee!" It is as if Jehovah said, "Without Me ye can do nothing, but with Me ye can do all things. Lean on Me. Take hold of My hand. Be filled with the power of My Spirit. There is a fountain of strength for you." We can not win the fight alone. The power of any organism is the measure of the force that has been taken into it from without. Civilization is the measure of the force that man has appropriated. Peoples who reject the might of steam, electricity, the falling water, the lever and the fulcrum remain savages. The reformer who does not join hands with God will find himself, sooner or later, under some juniper-tree. The soul that tries to conquer in his own strength will surely be crushed? If we fail, the fault will be our own. We are in the midst of an infinite ocean of power. If we appropriate the might of Jehovah we can not fail. Then, too, we need to learn, as Elijah did, that God works quietly, without noise and shouting. He was not in the earthquake, the mighty wind, nor yet in the devastating fire. He is not specially in the noise and tumult of excitement and confusion. It is the "still

small voice" of holy, persistent, helpful, Christlike living that reveals the presence of God, charms men to Him, and wins lasting victories.

But, best of all, God gave to the discouraged man a new commission and a new call to duty. That was proof that Jehovah trusted him and thought that he could yet win some of the grandest victories of his life. After the still small voice come the words that ring like the blast of a trumpet: "Go, return on thy way by the wilderness of Damascus." God did not reject Elijah because, in a time of great depression, he ran away from the post of duty. There was work for him to do. God trusted him. You have failed, surrendered to the enemy and deserted the post of duty, but God has not ceased to love you. He trusts you. You can do something for Him. "Go; return on thy way." There is work, but you can not find it where you are. Hazael and Jehu could not be anointed in the wilderness. Jesus could not redeem the world and remain in heaven. The heathen can not be reached by dreaming in American parlors. The unsaved can not be brought to God simply by joining in forms of worship in some gorgeous temple. Lost sheep can not be brought home by sighing at the door of empty folds. Go, find the place of duty, and then do your best.

Some of the grandest work of the old prophet was done after that day of discouragement and failure. Get up and go to work. The future may be better than the past.

Work is the best medicine for a discouraged man after he has had sympathy and rest. You will find strength in action. "The standing pool breeds miasma and harbors croaking frogs." The running brook keeps itself pure, while it journeys to the sea, singing a song of praise to the Creator. When one can not work he can not be normal. I do not wonder that John the Baptizer became despondent and was filled with doubt as he was condemned to purposeless inactivity in the gloomy old castle of Makor. I do not wonder that Jerome of Prague wavered when the walls of the dungeon at Constance closed about him. The kindness of Jehovah is ultimate in that He calls us from under the juniper-tree with a new commission for a larger work.

Do not be discouraged. God has not changed. Your friends have not changed. The sun is shining beyond the cloud. Do not leave the field of battle because you have been once defeated. Some of God's workers have done their best after failure. "Sire, the day is lost," said a marshal to Napoleon during one of the terrible battles of that celebrated

Italian campaign. "Yes," calmly replied the great commander, "we have lost one battle, but there is time enough to win another before sunset." He gave new orders, inspired his men as he only could, redoubled his efforts, routed the enemy and gained the day. You may have lost one battle, but there is time enough to win another before sunset. You may have deserted the post of duty, but God loves you. "Return on thy way by the wilderness of Damascus." Trust God. Do thy best, and thou wilt yet crown kings and anoint prophets; and, best of all, thou wilt find one of God's chariots waiting for you in the gathering twilight.

VI.

THE DEBT OF POWER.

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, . . . So will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."—Esth. iv, 14-16.

ESTHER was seated upon the throne. Here was a very great exaltation, if we judge after the manner of men. Here, with the crown on her brow, was a Jewess; a member of a captive and enslaved race; an orphan, who, just a little time ago, was the reputed daughter of a common porter. Does this seem strange? It looks so. But hold, we must not judge an event till the whole truth is known. A

life can not be tested till every hour has passed. There is something back of the elevation concerning which we have read. God does not choose according to the wisdom of men.

Esther sat upon the throne, and soon made some very important discoveries. She saw that attainment does not satisfy the human heart. Man climbs to the very topmost round of the ladder of fame and favor, and then reaches into the infinities beyond, the while restlessness and misery are ever active in the temple of the soul. In the royal palace was a man named Haman, before whom everybody bowed save the little Jew who sat at the gate of the king. Haman was just one bow short. That was all. He had everything else in the kingdom. He was one bow short, and that lack begat within him a spirit which ruined his life. Driven on by ambition and unsatisfied longing he resolved that Mordecai and all his people should die. The decree was signed and sealed with the king's ring; and everybody said that the Jews must perish. No, not everybody. Mordecai said that they must not. But who was he? Only one of the despised race. What could he do? Nothing, surely. The decree was aimed at him in particular. To what purpose, then, was it that he said that the Jews must not perish?

But there was another who said the same thing. Who? God. Haman had made his calculations without taking God into the account. That has been the mistake of other men beside Haman. It is very foolish to plan without taking God into our thought. Yes, God said that the Jews must not perish, and God and one faithful man make a majority against the world. Mordecai hoped in God, but he knew that He works through human agencies. Then the truth flashed upon him like a gleam of light. There was Esther. God had raised her to the throne. That exaltation must have been for a great purpose. What greater purpose could God have had in mind than the salvation of His chosen people? Mordecai went to Esther. She hesitated. I do not wonder. The move might cost her her life. And then she could be of no service to anybody. Everybody knew that it was death to go before the king unbidden. It was an awful hour. Mordecai felt that Esther had been raised up by Jehovah to meet this supreme emergency. His conviction was born of an inner light. After reciting to her the whole story, he made the burning appeal of the text. The truth came to Esther with the flashlight of conviction; and as truth never loses its power, we may hope that it will to-day burn in our souls like coals of living fire.

The reverent student of history comes to believe that God has planned and worked to the end that in every crisis hour, when the interest of His cause and kingdom are at stake, He might have men and women providentially at the post of duty, who would live and sacrifice for truth and victory.

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we may."

There is such a thing as the hand of God in human history.

God is never surprised. Whenever a crisis hour has come there has always been a man standing in the forefront of the battle, armed with the very best weapons of his age, ready to lead his followers on to victory. The tides of life may ebb and flow, but the rise is sure and steady. When man by his wickedness had so corrupted the streams of life that God saw that the only chance for the best was to begin again, and one was needed who could stand alone in the midst of the wickedness of his age and hold on to God with a steady hand in the darkness; then Noah was at the post of duty ready for the crisis. When the time had come for Jehovah to separate to himself a people to whom he could give laws, types, ceremonies, and Scriptures, that were to be

the schoolmasters of the ages, then in Ur of the Chaldees was found a man who saw so deeply into the mysteries of God, and chose the truth so loyally, that he became the father of Israel, and the "friend of God." When the years of famine were devastating the land, and Israel must go down into Egypt for bread, they found there one who had reached the throne by way of a dungeon, into which fraternal hatred and human wickedness had thrust him, and who thus had power to save the chosen people in the hour of supreme need. When the four hundred years of bondage were over, and the hour had come in which God's people should find deliverance and begin the journey to the land of promise, there was Moses, a man skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, prepared to be the deliverer of his people, the father of history, and the lawgiver of the ages. When the fullness of time had been ushered in, and the Son of God was incarnated and had purchased human redemption by the sacrifice of Himself; when the hour had come when the gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth and the Gentiles made partakers of its gracious benefits, then Saul of Tarsus was at hand. He was a man schooled in the language and spirit of the dominant civilization, who, also, had added Greek to Jewish

culture, and was moved by an enthusiasm which prompted him to traverse two continents to preach the way of life to dying men. When fifteen hundred years had passed, and the mistake of wedding the Church to the State was bearing the fruits of superstition, immorality, religious tyranny, bigotry, and all manner of wickedness, then God had a man prepared for the hour. Martin Luther came, proclaimed his theses, preached the old Gospel with new power, printed his Bible, remolded the German people and brought about the great Reformation. When two centuries more had passed away, and the Church had lapsed again into cold formalism; when the seeds of English Deism had been planted, and French infidelity and German rationalism were the harvest; when gross immorality and outbreking wickedness characterized those who affected to be the religious leaders and instructors of the people, then the eye of the world was fastened upon three men. Whence came the Wesleys and Whitefield, if God did not raise them up to meet such a crisis as comes but once in a thousand years? They preached the old Gospel with a new power, secured a return to the evangelistic methods of the apostolic days, set in motion a tide wave of experimental religion that will roll on to the end of time,

saved the State and infused a new life into the Church. They were men of God, who met the needs of the hour as God-sent men always do. When the new world had been discovered, and a place found in which the problems that would make for a new civilization could be solved, where the tree of civil and religious liberty might best flourish for the good of the downtrodden of the whole earth, and when the events were ripe for one of the greatest movements of the ages, then God had a seed prepared for the planting from which a noble harvest might be expected. We see Jehovah sowing the soil of the new world with the Puritans, the Dutch, the Huguenots, and the Quakers. These all were men who loved freedom and were ready to die for it; who hated tyranny, and yet respected the rights of their fellow-men; who believed the Bible and were interested in the enlightenment of the intellect and the enthronement of conscience, and who counted not their lives dear unto themselves so that the sacred cause of humanity might be advanced. They must have been at the post of duty because God had been preparing them against the day of need. In like manner Washington came for an hour when none but God-sent men could do the work that must be done to prevent the turning back of the shadow on the

sun-dial of progress. And in like manner, also, when the darkness of great confusion had come; when the tumult of the irrepressible conflict was filling the land; when the shadow of an immense fear cast its gloom over all hearts and men trembled as they looked at the frowning clouds that filled our national sky, and feared that the beginning of the end of the Union had come, then God had a man at the helm of the Ship of State, who, with the tenderness of a woman and the strength of a giant, bore upon his shoulders the sum of a nation's burdens, and in his heart the sum of a nation's griefs; while he said to redhanded treason, "Lay not thine hand upon the Goddess," and to the oppressor of an enslaved race, "Let my people go free."

When the times of need are come, God always has at hand men and women who are prepared to live and die, as well as to win glorious victories for His name and the advancement of His kingdom. That is the law. Mordecai felt that there was a great need pressing upon his people. One of that people had come to the throne. It must have been that God had been planning for this exaltation against this time of need. And so he had. There is such a thing as the hand of God in history.

We have come to a time of greatest need. The

battle of the giants is raging all about us. This is an age of great cities. The tides of life are pouring into our urban centers. Here the problems of the future are to be solved. Here the power of Christianity is to be tested as it never has been before. Can the religion of the cross save the cities? If it can not, the beginning of the end of our civilization is at hand. In our great cities are massed the forces that are antagonistic both to Church and State. Here poverty as well as wickedness is congested. Here the wretched exist, but can not be said to live. Here the forces of evil are gathered together. Here the rum power is doing its deadliest work. Here are found the slum districts, the sweatshop in its worst form, great festering cesspools of moral corruption, and the inspiration to violence and anarchy. Here the enemies of the home are most rampant. Here vice walks abroad in the light of the clearest noonday. Can the gospel of the Son of God save these congested centers of life? That is a tremendous problem. This is an age of great social and industrial revolutions. It will not be wise to close our eyes to the truth. Mighty tide waves of agitation have started up in Europe that are breaking upon these Western shores. The masses are crying for rights as they cry for bread. It is thought, in some

quarters, that the Church does not care for the masses. Jesus Christ always did. The Church always must. One of the questions with which we stand face to face is this, How can the Church cross the gulf that yawns between it and the masses? That gulf must be crossed. Who will lead the way? There are storm centers in our national as well as our social sky. It is an age of agitation. It is an age of unrest, doubt, and fear. The Church must arouse herself and make the great, needy, dying world feel that she has the Spirit of Christ. It is an age of transformation. It is an age when people care little about creed or orthodoxy, but when immense stress is laid upon life. Men are looking to see the Divine, not in creeds, but in the actions of those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Son of man who went about doing good. The religion of the future must have power to transform life and make it Christlike. That is what men are demanding and hoping for. This is an age of great world movements. Doors of opportunity are open before the Church in all lands. The civilization of the entire Orient will change within a few years. Shall the new civilization be Christian or semi-infidel? The Dark Continent is stretching its hands westward for help. How shall we answer the plead-

ing cry? The world is asking for the Gospel. Shall we respond to the plea of a dying world? Do you say yes? I beg you to remember that if the world is to hear the Gospel, men and money must freely be laid upon the altars of God. What answer will the Church give to these burning questions? It is an age of civic as well as social reforms. It is an age when men are demanding that the kingdom of God shall stand for everything that makes for a better life. It is an age of race problems, of social cyclones, of industrial tempests and moral whirlwinds. This is surely an age of such immense needs as have not presented themselves to the Church since Jesus Christ went home to heaven.

We have seen that God has an answer for every crisis. We have seen, also, that His answer has always been men and women whom he has inspired to move to the front and do His work. God's answer to the immense crisis which is at hand must be found in the devoted lives of His consecrated children. You may be a part of His answer if you will. God needs you. He wants you. He is calling you. There is a great work to be done. You can do some of it. What will be your answer to the call of the Infinite?

The children of God are raised up, not for them-

selves alone, but, very largely, for the sake of what they can do to forward the interests of the kingdom of God. That was certainly the conception that Mordecai had of the matter. It is as if he had said to Esther, "You do not suppose that God raised you to the throne of the greatest monarch of the known world for your own sake? You do not suppose that your exaltation is due to the fact that God loves you more than he loves the humblest Jewess in the farthest corner of the great empire? It must be true that you were raised to the throne because you could be of some great service to the cause of God and your people." That is what Mordecai thought. Great blessings, heavenly visions, lofty genius, special revelations and advantages have not been given primarily for the sake of the men and women to whom they came. The prophets did not prophesy for themselves, nor yet alone for the age in which they lived. The lofty visions of Isaiah, the gleams of glory that came to Moses on the Mount, the sorrowful strains of Ezekiel, the mighty work of Elijah, the revelations that were made to Daniel, were by no means for themselves. Does any one suppose that the old blind bard of Greece sang his matchless songs for himself? Was the lofty genius of Plato and Aristotle given that these men alone might

enjoy bliss of reveling in the deep mysteries of philosophy? Is it not rather to be supposed that they were endowed with genius that the world might know the truth? Did Dante have visions of celestial wisdom for Dante's sake? Did Raphael paint for himself? Was the genius of Michael Angelo for himself or the world? Was it to gratify Michael Angelo that power was given him to hang the dome of St. Peter's in midair, to carve the "Moses" and paint the "Last Judgment" on the ceilings of the Sistine chapel? No, he wrought for the world. Will anybody believe that Columbus was led on to the discovery of the New World for his own profit? He got little out of the discovery. He was brought in chains from the land which he gave to the map of the world. The name of another was given to that land. But the discovery was a glorious achievement. It brought to light a soil of virgin possibilities, and revealed a land where the problems of modern civilization could best be solved. Surely the genius of Columbus was not for the great Genoese, but for humanity. As we stand in the immense libraries of the world; as we think of the reading millions; as we call to mind the thousand and one agencies that have been developed for human enlightenment, can

we think for a moment that to Gutenberg was given a vision of the printing press for his own sake?

No man was ever lifted to a throne for his own sake alone. He is one only of the many millions who are to be blessed because of the elevation. This is a truth which we need to apprehend. We are what we are and where we are, not because God loves us better than he loves others; not because we are the special favorites of heaven, but because we can do the more for humanity. Are you rich? Have you the gift of a special genius? Have you the power to influence men? Are you gifted with the ability of song? Are you able to direct large enterprises and marshal immense forces for victory? Have you been able to secure a splendid education? Have you time to read? Have you at command the means to secure a great library? Have you been chosen to fill some exalted position in Church or State? Have you the genius for leadership? Think not that all this has come about, or any of it has come about, simply because God wanted to serve and reward you. Men who use their exaltation simply to serve themselves are traitors both to God and humanity. Men and women are raised to thrones for the sake of the work they can do. Have you been raised to any throne whatsoever? I beg

you to remember that the exaltation is to the end that you may be a blessing to the world.

If we fail to meet the crisis for which we have been raised to the throne; if we fail to do the work for which God has commissioned us; if we live for selfish ends, we shall be the greatest losers. It was a very solemn truth to which Mordecai gave utterance when he said, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." If we fail to meet the crisis and do the work for which we have been raised to the throne some one else will be delegated to take our place. The pages of history are written over with the story of rejected ministries. God's work must go on, but we shall suffer loss. We must use or lose. That is the law of the universe. If Saul will use the kingdom for selfish ends, it will be taken from him and given to David. If you will not make use of your opportunities, God will take them away from you. If you can give a testimony and will not, the experience back of the testimony will become a thing of the past. If you have a song to sing and will not sing it, the power to sing will be taken away. You know why the "Dead Sea" came to be the Dead Sea. All

rivers flow into it, and none flow out. That is the secret of dead souls, as well as dead seas. Selfishness is sure to be self-destruction. But while we suffer loss the cause of God will not fail. Saul may be a traitor to Jehovah, but the kingdom will be given to David, who will be faithful to the divine call. Stephen may go down into the grave, but out of the influences that spring from that grave will come Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, who will be able to do more for the cause of Jesus Christ than Stephen ever could have done. John Brown may hang above the quaking soil of Old Virginia, but Abraham Lincoln will come after him, and the race that was held for two hundred years in bondage shall be made free. God's cause will conquer.

"Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own."

The price of victory is a sublime consecration of ourselves for that victory. Esther said: "Fast and pray for me three days, and then I will go in to the king; and if I perish, I perish." She won the victory by giving herself. That is forever the price

that must be paid. There is a sublime scene pictured for us in the Gospels. Jesus is hanging on the cross. The chief priests and elders have prevailed. They have the Galilean in their power. He can never trouble them more, so they think. He is paying the price of his ambition with his blood. The men who have entrapped him stand at the foot of the cross to watch the agonies of their suffering victim. As they look on, they say, as if in derision, and as if it were an utterance that proved beyond the possibilities of doubt that they were right and he was wrong, "He saved others, Himself He can not save." They have come to the conclusion that, as He could not save Himself He never saved anybody else, and, therefore, he must be a fraud. Little do these men know of the plan of salvation, and as little of the true philosophy of life. If Jesus had saved Himself He could not have saved any one else. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This law holds for men as well as it did for the Son of God. The man who avoids his Calvary can not save any one else. We can serve God only when we give ourselves. Esther won because she threw herself at the feet of the king for deliverance or death. The Master said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

The price of victory is a sublime consecration. And what is consecration? It is not a sentiment. It is not a song. In the olden times the liegeman knelt before his Lord and said, "I now devote myself to thee, for life and limb and all earthly regard." That was consecration. When the forces of the English under Edward III had invested Calais, and all hope that the city might be saved was taken away, then, at the suggestion of Edward, six of the noblest of the town went out to the conquering king, bareheaded, barefooted, with halters about their necks, and knelt at the feet of their conqueror, and said that they gave themselves to him to be treated as he pleased to treat them, on condition that he would spare the city. That was consecration. When the Sioux Indians swept over Western Minnesota in the summer of 1862, with flaming torch and gleaming tomahawk, they sacked and burned a certain settlement. Among those who escaped immediate death were two brothers,—the one about twelve and the other three years of age. It was a terrible experience for those lads. They were left alone. They knew that there was a fort, some eighty miles away, which would give them protection if they could only reach it. But eighty miles was a long distance. The little three-year-old could

not travel so far over the rough roads. What could they do? What did they do? The older boy could not bear the thought of escaping alone and leaving his little brother, either to starve or be slaughtered by the savage foe. What could he do? He took the little fellow on his shoulders; and over the long reach of rough roads; through the sharp prairie grasses; in the darkness of the night; in hunger and weariness, he carried the boy to the fort. That was consecration. When the last hour of the awful battle of Waterloo had come, and it was soon to be decided whether the star of Napoleon was to set in gloom or to rise higher and higher, to shine with greater and more lasting brilliancy, grand old Marshal Ney ordered up the Old Guard. At the word of command, they moved forward, with waving plumes and gleaming sabres. But, ere they reached the place where the forces of the Iron Duke were drawn up to receive them, they came suddenly upon a deep ditch that yawned in their path. What did they do? The victory must be won or the battle lost within a few minutes. The Old Guard had never been known to falter. They did not falter then. The foremost riders spurred into the ditch, and filled it with the bodies of horses and men, and thus bridged it for the passage of their comrades, who

rode forward to join in that awful combat with the giants of England who formed the invincible squares at the summit of the hill. That was consecration. Consecration is self-surrender. It is taking our lives in our hand to go forward, to do the work for which God has sent us. You remember the closing chapter of "Ben Hur." The young Jew had come to be the richest subject in the world. He had often wondered how he could use his money in the service of his new-found king. One night, as he stood with his young wife on the roof of their palace in Antioch, word came that a storm of bitterest persecution had burst upon the Christians at Rome. A truth flashed upon him. Here was an opportunity to do something for the king who had come and gone. The Romans would not molest a tomb. He would go to Rome, and dig vast galleries in the heart of the earth beneath the city or its suburbs. These galleries should serve as the tombs of the saints. But he would make them something more than tombs. He would build in them chapels where the hunted Christians might worship God. There they might find shelter and thus religion would be kept alive until the storm of persecution had passed away. Ben Hur went to Rome, expended vast sums of money and made a refuge for

the Church during those days of storm. From that refuge she came forth, when the storm had passed, to rule the world in the interest of humanity. That was consecration. That was a sublime act, but a sublimer one may be witnessed to-day, as, conscious of your mission, you consecrate yourselves to God and go from this sacred hour to live for him who has called you into the conflict that is to end in certain victory.

VII.

MODERN JEHUS.

"The driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously."—2 Kings ix, 20.

A WATCHMAN stood on the round tower of Jehoram's palace at Jezreel, scanning the horizon in every direction. Presently he saw a cloud of dust rising along the highway, far to the east, at the point where the road wound upward from the Jordan Valley to the plain of Jezreel. Instantly he was on the alert. That cloud might mean weal, or it might mean woe. The army of the king was engaged with the siege of Ramoth-gilead. That rising cloud might mean that the Syrian army had been conquered; and it might mean that the broken fragments of the royal forces were in wild flight before a victorious foe. Word was sent to the king, who at once dispatched a messenger to meet the ap-

proaching cloud and ask, "Is it peace?" He went but did not return. Another rider was sent forth to ask the same question. He also came not again. By this time the cloud of dust had approached so near that the trained eye of the watchman could make out many of the component parts of the cavalcade which swept on beneath it. There, at the very front, was seen a chariot drawn by four dashing steeds. They were white with foam, and yet the driver urged them on. There was no mistaking the meaning of that reckless driving. Over at Ramoth-gilead, in charge of the king's army, was one who was known in the camp as the mad driver. This must be he. There was none other in all Israel who would drive at that dashing pace. Word was at once sent to the king, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu, for he driveth furiously." This single sentence introduces the commander-in-chief to us in such a way as to give us a clear insight into his character. We shall not be surprised at anything which we read in the narrative concerning Jehu after this introduction.

The career of this man brings before us two distinct lines of truth that may be studied to great advantage. The word which is here translated "furiously" suggests some characteristics

which are noble, and some that are ignoble; while it indicates one line of conduct that ought to be shunned, and another that may well be copied. Whether zeal, impetuosity, and activity along the line of our purpose suggest destroying madness or divine inspiration, depends wholly on the spirit that prompts the action. There is an impetuosity that is born of confidence and conviction, or of the necessity of heroic action. There is also an impetuosity that is born of foolhardy recklessness that borders, at times, on madness. There are Jehus in modern life.

He is a reckless driven who gives rein to extravagance and prodigality. These are steeds that have hurried many a man to ruin. If you are spending more money than you earn, you are living the life of the prodigal, no matter whether the bills foot up to \$25 a month or \$2,500. The prodigal of the Scriptures found himself clothed in tatters and rags, friendless and alone in a far country, in time of awful famine, because he spent more than he earned; or, perhaps, because he spent and did not earn at all. The man who in health, and under favorable circumstances, spends more than he earns, or even all that he earns, is driving recklessly towards a precipice. You can not always hope to be well. The demon of disease will, by and by, fasten his

grip upon you, or upon those you love; and in that hour you may find yourselves sadly in need of the money you have spent with a prodigal hand. The time may come when a short journey to the mountains or to the sea would save a life that is strangely dear to you. That journey can not be taken because of prodigality that ought not to have been permitted. You have employment to-day, but the time may come when depression in business will throw you out of work, no matter how faithful you have been to your employers. And you know what that will mean. By and by, your boy will be old enough to go away to school. If you could give him a little help he would get on magnificently, and secure preparation for his life work such as would bring him marked success. But you can not help him, when that supreme hour of opportunity comes, if you spend all that you earn to-day. By and by you will be too old to work. This is the age of young men. It is pitiable to see how men, who are by no means old, are crowded out. Men who are not more than fifty or fifty-five years of age have come to me again and again to say that it was impossible to get work. They had gone to one place of business after another only to hear the same word of refusal, "You are too old. We need and must have young men of

vigor and push or we can not compete with other business men." You are vigorous and active now, but in a little while you will have crossed the dead line; and you will be pushed aside as others are to-day. Day after to-morrow you will be old. And what will you do when the flakes of eternity are flying, if you have nothing laid aside against that time of need? Rainy days are sure to come. Times of depression are sure to come. Days of sickness and loss are sure to come. Old age is sure to come. And he is a reckless driver who speeds on thoughtlessly, carelessly, furiously toward those days without making preparation for their coming.

He who spends more than he makes is sure to find himself exposed to an awful temptation. There are hundreds in this city who have yielded to temptation, such as they never would have listened to but for the fact that they found themselves overwhelmed with debt, because they had given rein to extravagance and prodigality. These steeds have drawn many a man to ruin. They may draw you to the precipice. Extravagance and prodigality have led to acts of dishonesty, to the forging of a check, the appropriation of money that belonged to another, and to many a similar deed which has opened wide the flood gate to the incoming of the billows of woe.

I implore you have a care. Close the door against the possibility of such a disaster, and save yourself for the future by living wisely at the present.

He drives recklessly who indulges in gambling of any sort. No matter whether it is on a large scale or a small one, whether it is concerned with markets or horses, lotteries or elections, it is dangerous business; and many a man has been plunged into the abyss who has driven recklessly along that path. When the records of crime are opened we shall find that gambling has been the cause of many a defalcation, theft, murder, and suicide. You know how men are entangled in this dangerous business. They catch the fever of desire to make money more rapidly than they can by honest methods. They chance small sums and are successful. Then they rashly chance larger ones. They lose more frequently than they win. They find themselves overwhelmed with debt. They venture more largely in the hope of winning enough to pay off old scores. They close their eyes and urge the panting steeds furiously onward, unmindful that the gulf of despair is just before them; and, before they are aware of it, they awake to the awful consciousness that they are ruined. Maddened by the excitement; ever led to hope that they might succeed; rendered

desperate by continued failure, they have taken money that did not belong to them; they have mortgaged the home; they have borrowed money that they never can pay, and now all is lost. A good name is tarnished. Reputation is ruined. Home is broken up, and, in all too many cases, the doors of the penitentiary close upon them.

He drives recklessly who appropriates money that belongs to another, hoping to be able to replace it before he is detected. I could give you the names of many young men who have followed that plan and were driven over the precipice to endless ruin. Many a man has committed suicide because he was afraid to face the consequences of his deeds. I beg of you to have a care. If you are standing face to face to-night with such temptations as I have described, or temptations that are like unto these, turn away from them. Say no, in such manner that the tempter will not misunderstand you. Set your face like a flint against the evil. It were a thousand times better to have a little honesty earned, than to hug the delusive fancy that you may, by following the path against which I have warned you, secure a larger portion. It is a delusive fancy. There are comparatively few who ever win along that line. And if you should win, your success

would be the accumulation of money such as could not fail to bring the loss of self-respect, confidence of friends, and other treasures which are dearer to the soul than uncounted gold.

He drives recklessly who employs dishonest business methods or questionable practices for the sake of gain. He may make money for a time, but there is surely a yawning gulf before him. He may seem to succeed. He may crush out all competitors, as others have done again and again in this country. He may amass a fortune such as will be the envy of countless thousands. But what is fortune when compared with character. Fortune must be left behind. Character we take with us. It is a part of ourselves. It is what God knows us to be. And we are journeying toward a land where one will be counted rich or poor, not in accordance with the amount of material treasures which he has been able to gather together, but according to the character which he has built up in harmony with truth and righteousness. The business world is full of reckless drivers. There are those who drive over the interests of the poor, over the rights of humanity, over moral law, over future hopes, over the struggling and unfortunate. The great prize is gold. It must be gained by fair means or foul.

Everything that stands in the way of the ambition and purpose to be rich, must be thrust aside. Reckless drivers! They will find at last that "the world they loved so much has turned to dust and ashes to their touch." I have nothing to say against the accumulation of riches honestly earned, but I do declare that he drives recklessly and to ruin, who, for the sake of becoming rich, drives over the rights of others, crushes out competitors by unjust and dishonest methods, and adds to his fortune by the employment of means such as are little less than robbery. Justice holds an even balance, and no man can live a life of wrong, trample on the rights of others, employ dishonest or questionable methods and not wake up at last to the consciousness that he has driven with reckless hand into the gulf of ruin.

He drives recklessly who disregards the warnings of conscience and inspiration. Man is making a journey over the path of life for the first and only time. The way is strange. The path lies through the country of the enemy. Dark clouds frequently surround us. We must journey during the night as well as day. We need a guide. God has spoken to us by two voices. If we will but listen to these we shall be led aright toward the gates of the future. There is a friend at either hand.

Conscience speaks in the interest of the soul and of true manhood. You can not disregard conscience and drive safely. He drives recklessly who stills the speaking of the voice within. But there is a voice that speaks from without. God has not left everything to impression. There is the voice of inspiration. He has given us the Bible. That is the chart of the great sea. It speaks to us clearly concerning the way of life. It makes plain the will of God. It marks out the path of duty. It gives us all the light we need to get home. And not only has our Father given us a divine book, he has, also, given us a divine life. God sent His Son to live in the world among men to make known the way of right. He is the perfect man. His is the pattern life. He is the light of the world. His is a spotless character and the divine ideal.

Thus the inner and the outer voices are constantly speaking to man. They are always whispering of duty, of law, of love, of the great hopes of the heart, of what man ought to become, of what he ought to do, and of the glory that awaits him if he will but walk in the path of duty. A light serene and beautiful is forever falling on the path of life. He drives recklessly who drives on with ears closed to the whispering of these heavenly

friends The engineer is foolhardy who disregards the red lights and dashes on with a full head of steam into the darkness. The traveler is foolhardy who walks on in the tall grass, heedless of the soul-chilling ring of the rattlesnake's note of warning. The mariner is foolhardy who disregards the chart, and, without a pilot, keeps on his way down the channel where the deadly rocks are concealed. The frontiersman is foolhardy, who, far out on the prairie, many miles from home, pays no attention to the phenomena that tell of the coming blizzard. But infinitely more reckless, infinitely more foolhardy is he who drives onward down the path of life with ears closed to the whisperings of the voices of conscience and inspiration.

He drives recklessly and furiously who closes his eyes and keeps them closed to the consequences of his deeds. The precipice of destruction-bringing habits may be just before him. His choices are whirling him rapidly toward the abyss that yawns deep, dark, and deadly, in his path. But he scorns the danger signals, closes his eyes to the red lights of warning, and drives on into the darkness. He says, practically if not absolutely, "Never mind the future. The genius of the present sings a charming song. My soul delights in the fascinating ex-

citement of this mad pace. Let the future take care of itself! Drive on! Make the wheels of pleasure spin! Never mind the flashing signals! Let the conservative alarmist croak! We will live this hour no matter what may come the next." That is folly. He is mad who sells the future for any prize the present may offer.

He drives recklessly who drives toward eternity unprepared to meet God. We must go into eternity. We must meet God. Our past will go before us to meet us on the shores of that other country. We must meet our lives in judgment, and he is a reckless driver who drives headlong toward eternity, carelessly and indifferently. The engineer is reckless who goes at full speed into the water that has overflowed the banks of the stream, without knowing whether or not the bridge has been swept away. But thrice reckless is he who drives furiously into the dark waters of death without knowing that his feet will press the bridge of life through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, over which he may pass in safety to the mansions of the blessed. Be wise. Trust God to-day. Live in the present, but for the future. Let reason hold the reins with steady hands. Listen to the voices of conscience and inspiration. Follow the guide. Drive toward the light, so shalt thou

drive in safety toward the land of the eternal morning.

But there is another line of thought suggested by the character of this man, whose life and work are introduced to us by these strange words. Jehu was a man who, when he had any work to do, did it at once, enthusiastically, and with a whole heart. When the hour of action came he threw himself into the work with irresistible enthusiasm. Jehu was convinced that he might wear the crown of empire and rule over Israel. He came to feel that God had chosen him for this great work. The crisis hour was reached when the prophet took him away from his fellows and anointed him for the kingdom with the holy oil of consecration. In that moment the time for dreaming had passed. The time for action had come. Jehu did not sit idly down to think of the words of the prophet, and dream of the golden opportunities and the great honor that would come to him when he was king. He arose and began to act. The day was not over until he was flying in hot haste toward the gates of Jezreel. He did not let the sun set until he was on his way to settle accounts with Jehoram. Had he done so, his cause would have been lost. Had he not acted promptly, news of what had been done would have reached

the king in his palace at Jezreel. Jehoram would have doubtless been supported by the king of Judah. They would have had time to prepare for the conflict, and Jehu would have been worsted, or, at least, have conquered only after long delay and much loss of life. But acting as he did, promptly, enthusiastically, almost furiously, he made himself master of the situation.

He had work to do, and he did it at once. That is the way to win. The pages of history are written over with the records of human lives which have failed because of the lack of prompt action; and, on the other hand, the men who have won grandly, subdued mighty enemies, and gained great victories, have been the men who have acted promptly, heroically, enthusiastically, and almost rashly. How did the little Corsican come to gain the place which he holds in French history? It was because he acted on the plans which he had matured. On the 10th of May, 1796, the French troops, under the command of Napoleon, were face to face with the Austrians at Lodi. The prize of battle was the mastery of Italy. It was readily seen that nothing but the old stone bridge lay between the French and victory. Could that be crossed? All save one man said no. Napoleon said that it must be crossed. The Aus-

trian batteries were so placed that they could rake it with murderous fire. "It is impossible," said one of the officers, "that our men can force their way across that narrow bridge in the face of such an annihilating storm of bullets as must be encountered." "Impossible!" cried Napoleon. "That word is not French." He gave command to storm the bridge; and the Little Corsican himself was the second man on and across it. The bridge was crossed. The Austrians were defeated. Napoleon was master of Italy, and the star of his military genius rose at once to the zenith. It was the impetuosity of the man that won the victory. If you have made up your mind that a thing ought to be done, go at it and do it.

"Impossible" is a word that ought to be used sparingly. It is not wise to be rash, but I am persuaded that more people are ruined by a dilly-dally policy than by rashness. More men fail because of the lack of prompt action than for any other reason. Most people have ideals enough and grand enough, plans enough, and dreams bright enough. Failure is at the point of action.

You know why Hannibal failed. You remember that he swore eternal vengeance against Rome; that he calmly took possession of Spain; that he

pushed on to the east, successful over every opposition; that he conquered the hitherto unconquered passes of the Alps; that he hurled his war-worn veterans against the flower of the Roman army on the plains of the Po and gained a most decisive victory. Then came the battle of the Trasimene Lake. Rome was completely conquered. Her army was crushed. That was the critical hour. Hannibal was urged to march at once against the capital. Had he acted promptly, before Rome could recover from the awful blow which he had dealt her, he might have made himself master of the city and the republic. But, contrary to the exhortation of his best friends, he would not march. He did not avail himself of the fruits of his victory. He delayed, fearful of the consequences of prompt action. He waited, and while he waited Rome regained her feet. You know the rest. Rome could not be surprised again. Hannibal was defeated. The war was carried into Africa, and Carthage was reduced to ruin. These contrasts of history bring to us a great truth.

Victory is consequent on prompt and heroic action. This is true in every realm. It is true in business life. It is true for him who would gain an education; but, above all, it is true in the realm of

morals and religion. If you would make a success in life; if you would be an able soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ; if you would gain the crown of immortality and eternal life, you must not only know the path of duty but follow it. Jehu acted promptly, enthusiastically, and with impetuosity, because a crown had been offered to him. I offer you a crown to-night. It is not the crown of Israel, it is the crown of righteousness. It is the crown of life. It is the crown of eternal empire. It is the crown of glory. Would you wear it? You must take it. Begin now. Act heroically. Sacrifice everything that mars character. Live for the King. Walk in the path of righteousness. Act, and act promptly, and the crown will be yours.

Finally, the zeal of Jehu was born out of the consciousness that he was on a divine mission. God had a great work for him to do. The house of Ahab had trampled on all law, justice, and righteousness. The blood of Naboth, as well as that of ten thousand godly men, was crying to heaven for vengeance. The national life of Israel was so permeated with corruption and wrong that it could be saved only by sweeping away the leaders whom the people were following into the depth of degradation and sin. The house of Ahab must be destroyed.

The time does come in the history of a nation when the stains of wrong can be washed away only by the blood of the transgressors. Jehu was chosen for the work of vengeance. You remember that, on the very morning of which we have been speaking, one of the prophets came to Jehu and said, "The Lord Jehovah hath anointed thee to be king over Israel." Thus it came to pass that Jehu was driven to his work by an enthusiasm born of the feeling that he was God-sent.

The word inspiration is kindred to that which means madness; and it has happened many a time in the world's history that men to whom God has spoken and into whose heart He has put a great thought, have been regarded as madmen by the world who could not understand them. Paul was thought of as being mad, when he spoke with fiery eloquence before the king. John Brown was judged to be insane, because he lived and died with the great hope burning in his soul that slavery might end in these United States. Stephenson was thought to be crazy, because he maintained that steam would yet drive cars at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. Morse was thought to be a visionary enthusiast, because he believed that wonderful achievements would be wrought by the power of electricity. Co-

lumbus was treated as an insane man, because the great thought had taken possession of him that India could be reached by sailing westward. Socrates was a crazy man to the Greeks; Otis, of Boston, was a madman to the cultured friends of Lord Mansfield, because he dared to argue against the right of England to tax the colonies. It has happened a thousand times in the world's history that genius and piety have been condemned because they have dared to listen to the voices of God, and to believe in the possibility of great things. But let me remind you to-night that only as a man gets a commission from the throne of God and lives to work it out does life become sublime.

The great characters of history are the men and women who have felt that they are called of God to do a great work. Moses came to be the deliverer of Israel, because he heard the voice of Jehovah speaking to him from out the burning bush. Gideon wrote his name on the pages of history, because he heard a divine voice saying, "Go and deliver Israel. Lo, I have sent thee." Paul was another man after he had heard the crucified and risen Redeemer say, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Socrates is the grandest of the Greeks, because he would not desert the post of duty, at

which he had been stationed by what he believed to be the command of God. When Alaric, the king of the Goths, swept down from the north against the effete and powerless civilization of Rome, he was driven on, so he tells us, by a preternatural impulse which compelled him to march against the gates of the imperial city. And who will dare to say that he was mistaken? Who can say that it was not God's plan, through his labor, to rejuvenate a dying civilization, and fit it to bless the world? When Luther stood before the Diet of Worms he was unmoved, because he knew that he was standing for the truth of God. Joan of Arc was ever victorious as long as she could feel that she was acting on divine direction. And when she went beyond that she failed, just as other people have failed for the same reason before and since her time.

The days of inspiration have not passed away. I believe that the Bible is inspired as no other book in the world is inspired. But, having guarded that point, I believe that there is an inspiration for every man. I believe that God puts into the hearts of men everywhere great thoughts which can be worked out for the world's uplifting and saving. God will inspire you. He has called you to do something for humanity just as truly as he ever called Moses

to lead the children of the chosen seed to the shores of the land of promise. Listen to the voices of conscience and inspiration. Dedicate yourself to some great work. Be loyal to Jesus Christ. Make yourself acquainted with His plans. Catch His spirit. Live in the world as He lived in it and you can not fail to make your life sublime.

VIII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST A FACT AND A FORCE.

"That ye may be able . . . to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."—Eph. iii, 19.

PAUL had no sympathy with agnosticism. He was certain that knowledge was possible. He even dared to pray that his converts might know the unknowable. Does it seem that we have here a paradox pure and simple? How can one know the unknowable, how can one comprehend the incomprehensible? The question will answer itself, and the paradox will disappear, when we recognize the fact that one may know experimentally, practically, inspirationally, and savingly that which can not be known scientifically and exhaustively. The slave who, in the dark days before the Civil War, fled for life and liberty, with the yell of the bloodhounds

sounding in his ears from afar, did not know very much scientifically concerning the North Star. He may not have known why it never set, but held its place unchanged amid the changing hosts of heaven. He may not have known that it was a great central sun, with a solar system, like our own, revolving around it. Probably he would have been amazed and incredulous if any one had mentioned the distance from our earth to that twinkling lighthouse of the North. But he knew it; knew where to find it; knew that it had one fixed place in the northern sky, and he knew that its light led the way to a country under whose sheltering flag no man could be held in slavery.

There is a sense in which the love of Christ passeth knowledge. If we are asked to say why Christ loves us we shall not readily find an answer.

We can not comprehend the genesis of that love. As a rule love is born of love, or out of a soul's appreciation of a soul's worth. There is no mystery about the boy's love for his mother. She loves him; has loved him always, and sacrificed for him since the hour he was born. That love is a holy fire which kindles the flames of affection on the altars of his soul. But Jesus loves those who hate Him. I can never forget the prayer which came from the

depths of the Master's soul as He hung on the cross. About Him were those who had rejected Him and compelled Pilate to crucify Him; those who jeered at Him; those who drove the nails through His hands and feet, and those who delighted in His agony because of the intense hatred which they cherished for Him. With this rabble at His feet He prayed. What prayer would the natural heart prompt in such an hour? There was no thought of vengeance. The fountains of the great deep of His love were broken up and He prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." As I listen to that prayer I can readily believe the tradition which says that the first man converted on the Day of Pentecost was the Roman soldier who drove the spear into the heart of our Lord. He loves those who hate Him, and that makes His love incomprehensible.

The love of Christ passeth knowledge because He loves those whose spirit and character make them unworthy of His love. There is no mystery about the love of the American people for William McKinley. He was a typical American. He fought his way from the lowest positions to the highest post of honor. He was possessed of a great heart as well as a mighty intellect. He had the soul of a

hero. He proved himself to be a great statesman by his magnificent handling of immense problems both in time of peace and war. He manifested the Christ spirit when he prayed that no one might harm the wretch whose dastardly act had stricken him down in the midst of his years of loving service. How Christian patience and resignation were revealed when at last the end came! He was a typical American, a noble man, a loving husband, an unselfish patriot, a true friend, a whole-souled Christian, a brave warrior, and a great statesman. He was loved because he was worthy of love. But God, our Father, and Christ our Savior, love those whose characters mark them as unworthy of love. Hatred, bitterness, persecution, disobedience, enmity, insults, prodigality, and open rebellion never embitter the fountains of the divine heart. No matter how low you have fallen Jesus Christ loves you, and that is what makes His love the mystery of the ages.

We are naturally drawn to those who are in harmony with the deeper characteristics of our inner lives. The man of poetic temperament is drawn to the poet. The one who is possessed of a musician's soul finds his heart beating in sympathy with the great master's, whose compositions he admires. Men of scientific mind are drawn to those who use

the scientific method. Toilers of various crafts seek the company of those whose choices have led to the same style of life. There is such a thing as moral gravitation. Like draws like the world over, and love is born of harmony of character. But Jesus loves those who have so persistently chosen evil as to make it their good; and whose every heartbeat has come to be out of sympathy with the things He stands for. He is pure, and yet He loves the impure. He is truth, but He loves those whose lives are an open lie. He is light, and yet He loves those who have chosen darkness. He is from heaven, and yet He loves those who have never so much as looked in that direction. He always put the will of God first, and yet He loves those who are constantly trampling that will under their feet. His name and nature is love and yet He yearns over those who follow the bent of hatred and revenge. When these facts lie open to our view, then we see that the love of Christ is incomprehensible. It passeth human knowledge. We have no rule to measure it.

That thought suggests another. The love of Christ passeth knowledge because it is infinite, and our powers of comprehension are finite. It is impossible that the finite should know the infinite exhaustively.

On a perfect day in July, with a party of friends, I climbed to the summit of Mt. Marcy, the king of the Adirondacks. When we began our upward march from the level of Lake Colden, the mountains filled the horizon in every direction, and our view was limited to the few objects that were crowded into a narrow valley. But as we ascended, the prospect became wider and wider, until, as we stood on the bald brow of the grand old mountain, a magnificent panorama was spread out before our enraptured eyes. Far to the east the Green Mountains of Vermont rose to kiss the sky like hills of amethyst. Nearer to our exalted position, but yet a long way to the eastward, Lake Champlain came into view for almost its entire length; and seemed like a silver ribbon thrown loosely upon an immense carpet of emerald. In the valley of the Au Sable, we saw patches of woodland, with stretches of meadow between them; and, from our place of vision, there seemed to be but little difference between the giants of the forest and the humble grasses of the field. On the side of the mountain we beheld Lake Tear-of-the-Cloud, as the Indians have named it, nestling among the green pines like a crystal goblet in a bank of forest mosses. Sixty-three lakes were in sight, reposing on the bosom of the land-

scape, like so many fragments of a great mirror that had been shattered by the gleaming lightnings during an awful storm, and scattered to the four winds of heaven and allowed to fall wherever chance might guide. Below us in every direction the mountains rose from the level of the plain. The lower ones were wooded to the very summit, but the bare foreheads of their loftier brothers flashed back the shafts of sunlight which fell upon their brows of granite, while mountain and hill, valley and river, forest and meadow, were flooded with wave on wave of beauty and glory. That was an immense, soul-ravishing prospect; but we were conscious that our vision was limited. We knew that beyond the ken of our weary eyes, were unseen mountains, rivers, lakes, and wide oceans, beyond which were almost infinite stretches of plains, mountains, seas, and continents that go to make up this planet of ours. And then we knew that this world was only a speck, a mere grain of sand, an infinitesimal mote in the vast universe, made up of an innumerable host of suns and systems that wheel and circle through the limitless stretches of unthinkable space. We could not see all on that glorious day because the power of vision is limited.

It is exactly thus with the love of God. It is a boundless universe. Standing on some mountain

peak of experience or revelation, we have soul-ravishing visions of infinite love. But we can not compass the whole, which is to that which we comprehend as the two hundred miles seen from Mt. Marcy is to the boundless universe which lay beyond the reach of our weary eyes.

But, while there is a sense in which love of Christ passeth knowledge, there is another in which it can be known as a fact, apprehended as a force and experienced as the soul's complement, inspiration, and transfiguration.

There is a revelation of the love of Christ as a fact in what he has done for us. The grandest revelation of love is by action. We know that Jonathan loved David because the Crown Prince of Israel endangered his throne to serve his friend. We know that Enoch Arden loved Annie Lee, because he pined away and died when, returning from the long imprisonment on that loveliest island of a lovely sea, he found that, wearied with waiting, she had married Philip Ray, and he might never hold her to his heart again. We know that Jacob loved Rachel, for he served for her during fourteen years, and found that time as but a day, because Cupid was singing a song of hope in his heart. We know that the boys who wore the blue during the dark

days of the '60's loved their country, for they took their lives in their hands and went to the tented field, bared their breasts to whistling bullets and gleaming sabers, charged batteries that were hurling death and hell upon the doomed ranks, and gave their bodies to fill unnamed graves amid the canebrakes of the Sunny South. We know that Bismarck loved Germany, for his whole life is a witness to the truthfulness of his words, "Let them hang me if they will, so long as the rope with which they do the deed binds United Germany to the foot of the Prussian throne.

So likewise the love of Christ is revealed by what he did for man. When I see Jesus stepping down from the throne of glory to clothe Himself in the garments of human flesh; when I see Him born to poverty, loneliness, rejection, and shame; when I see Him pierced with the arrows of sorrow that were never aimed at another man; when I see Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, suffering more than mortal agony under the shadow of its great trees, while the weight of the world's sin is crushing into the dust the shoulders that could have borne with perfect ease the combined weight of ten million worlds; when I see His face stained with blood which an unthinkable mental agony drove in

great drops through every pore of His body ; when I see Him in Pilate's Judgment Hall, with the pitiless scourge cutting His quivering flesh till the red tides of life stained to crimson the pavement at His feet ; when I see the crown of thorns on His brow, which rude hands smite to His wounding ; when I see Him on the Way of Sorrows, fainting under the cross that was too heavy for His exhausted nature ; when I see Him on the brow of that little mountain which is yet high enough to be seen from every corner of the universe ; when I see them drive the nails into His hands and the spikes into His feet ; when I see them lift Him up between heaven and earth as though he were not fit for either ; when I hear that wail of agony from the cloud-encircled hill, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me !" when I see the Son of God close His eyes in death with a hissing rabble insulting His dying groans, then I enter the holy of holies of that wonderful verse, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

But the love of Christ is something more than a fact as a central revelation of a religious system. There is a revelation of that love as an experience. It is written, "The love of God is shed abroad in

our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." We may know experimentally and savingly that which we know little about scientifically and exhaustively. There is an experience of love when heart answers to heart and soul to soul, and experimental knowledge is soul-satisfying. The man who is dying of thirst as he tramps across the desert reaches the spring. He does not know where the water comes from. He knows nothing of its chemical composition. He does not know how it saves a dying man. But the deepest instincts of his nature tell him that water is what he must have or die. He kneels at the margin, drinks long and deeply, and feels again the thrill of life leaping through his body. From that hour he knows that water saves a man who is dying of thirst. He has experimental knowledge of its power. There is in man a spiritual instinct which declares that the love of Christ is the deepest need of the dying soul. In our need we look to the Lamb of God. We take Him as the man in the desert takes the water. The Holy Ghost does His own work. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. We feel the thrill of spiritual life. The love of Christ becomes an experimental fact. We know it. And that knowledge becomes a power in our lives.

The love of Christ is something more than a fact or an experience. It is one of the mightiest forces in the universe. We shall make a great mistake if we think of love simply as a sentiment. It is inspirational as well as transforming. Garibaldi offered his soldiers hunger, thirst, dangers, wounds, hardships, imprisonment, and possible death; and yet the Italians flocked to his standard by the thousand. That was because they loved Italy. Jean Val Jean saved the life of Marius when it was all against his own interest to do so. That was because he loved Cosette and wanted her to be happy no matter what came to him. Miriam, the old hag, who figures so prominently in Hypatia, scoured the world for gold to enrich Ebenezer. That was because he was her son, and she loved him. Eliza, the real heroine of Uncle Tom's Cabin, pressed her babe to her breast and leaped from cake to cake to make her way over the Ohio River, when it was full of running ice, and no man dared to follow her. That was because she loved her boy and preferred to die with him rather than have him dragged back into slavery again. The folk of the Glen waded through mountains of snow to stand around the grave of old William McClure, because his unselfish service had kindled the fires of love on the altars of their souls.

The black servants of David Livingstone bore the body of their dead friend across the territory of hostile tribes, where they had to fight for right of way, through tangled forests, in hunger and thirst, when they were obliged to leave many of their number dead by the wayside, for fifteen hundred miles to Zanzibar, that the sacred dust of the grand man might be sent to England for entombment in Westminster Abbey. That was because his Christlike service had won them to him body and soul.

If the love of men and women can exert such a mighty power and work such transformations in human life what a force the love of Christ will be to those who come to know it experimentally and savingly. As selfishness disappears before the music when the harp of life is touched by the hand of human love, so the love of Christ must be transforming, as well as the inspiration of the very best.

We must not overlook the end of this revelation of divine love. God in Providence and Grace, as well as in nature; is ever working toward a sublime end. Paul tells us what the end is, "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." The forces of nature are in full operation that the acorn may come to be a perfect oak-tree. The forces of the Spirit are in full play that I may be filled with

all the fullness of God. That is the hope of the Gospel. That is the goal of the Christian.

Glorious results will attend the answer of this sublime prayer. It will bring God into our lives. The greatest need of our age is an every-day and ever-present God. There has been a growing tendency in our age to make God unreal. The study of natural science, the materialism resulting from material prosperity, the substitution of the Reign of Law for the operation of a personal Will, have pushed God far from many men and women. To know the love of Christ will insure such an experimental knowledge of God as will bring the divine into our lives as a spiritual reality. That will secure results that are superlatively glorious.

The fullness of God is the fullness of goodness. The sublimest eulogy on the life of Christ is expressed in five words: "He went about doing good." If we are filled with the fullness of God the tides of benevolence must set in toward our fellow-men. We shall not be asking, "How much can I get out of the world?" but "How much can I do, how much can I give to it?" Lord Shaftesbury once said, with tears in his eyes, as he was talking of the wrongs of the working girls of London: "When I think that I am growing old, and that I have not

long to live, I hope it is not wrong, but I can not bear to die and leave the world with so much wretchedness in it." The love of Christ filled the noble man with an intense desire to do good. How tender, compassionate, loving, helpful Jesus ever was! If His Spirit dwells in us we shall look upon the world through His eyes; we shall have His hands, His heart, His feet; we shall live His life among men. The failure of life is the failure to represent the loving kindness of the Master.

The fullness of God is the fullness of power. Joseph Cook once said: "Nature is the glove on the hand of the Infinite." What power there is in nature! Some one has said that there is power enough in Niagara to drive all the factories of the whole world; and Niagara is only one of a multitude of rivers that pour their waters into the sea. What a power there is in steam! A few gallons of water expanded into steam will give us force to drive a long train of cars thundering across the continent. And the possibilities for steam are well-nigh infinite, for four-fifths of the earth's surface is covered with water, and there is fuel enough within reach to convert the whole into steam. This old world of ours is driving through space surrounded by an ocean of electrical possibilities which we have

only begun to learn how to use. There is power in electricity to send a message eight times around the earth in a single second of time; and that is only one of a thousand of its achievements. What power there is in sunshine! It lifts millions of tons of water from the surface of the ocean, that the thirsty lands may be satisfied, and millions of tons of material from the soil that the forests may be built up; and yet not more than one two-billionths of the sun's radiant energy reaches our world. Scientists tell us that if the earth were to be held in its orbit by steel wires, it would require as many, an inch in diameter, as could be stretched between the earth and the sun. How easily God holds the earth by the invisible wires of gravitation! And this planet is only one of an uncounted host.

Touch Nature where you please, and you will find a great storehouse of power. Now, remember the words of Joseph Cook: "Nature is but the glove on the hand of the Infinite." If there is so much power in the glove, how much power shall we find in the hand, how much in the arm, and how much in the infinite Personality back of hand and arm? There is power to create, govern, control, save, and keep. We can trust God and rest in peace. If we are filled with the fullness of God, we can not fail.

If we fail it will be because we put from us the power that will be far more than adequate for all our needs. Appropriate the power and the force will serve you. Know the love of Christ and you will be strong for victory and progress.

The fullness of God is the fullness of patience. We need something more than power. We need power at its best. Patience is the ability to do our best without worry and fret. God's mightiest forces are silent, unobtrusive, frictionless. The great man does his work and bides his time. William of Nassau was called The Silent; not because he could not talk, but because, in the awful tumult of his age, he could keep his counsels and was unmoved by the impetuosity of the storm to which he was exposed. If we are filled with the fullness of God we shall be able to do our work, meet our enemies, win our victories, and be calm in the midst of every storm.

The fullness of God is the fullness of rest and peace. How calm Jesus was! His was a troubled life. The waves were constantly breaking over Him; and yet you might have gone to Him at any moment to find that He was kept in perfect peace. He had found the dead center of life. Scientists tell us that if you could take your stand at the center of

the cyclone you would find perfect calm. Just think of it. The dead center of that whirling, seething, destructive, death-bringing tempest is perfect calm. Jesus had found the dead center of life, and could say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest has been the supreme desire of the human heart in all ages. The song of peace, like the musical murmur of the fabled fountain of immortality, has been filling the ears of the heavy laden in all lands and ages. And rest is the consciousness that fills the soul when we know that all is well, and that we are being taken care of.

Two great painters were asked to paint, each in his own way, his conception of Christian rest. The first threw upon the canvas a scene in the mountains. Rough and rugged hills filled the horizon in every direction. Nestling among them, where no breath of the tempest could ever sweep over its waters, was a little lake. "That," said he, "is my idea of peace." When the second painter unveiled his work, it was observed that he, too, had painted a scene in the mountains. But it was entirely different. In the background there were jagged cliffs, towering mountains, and storm-scarred valleys. Down one of the narrow valleys, that had been carved

through the heart of the granite by the forces of nature, came a mountain torrent, leaping from ledge to ledge, plunging down long stretches of tilted rocks, foaming white like the flanks of a racehorse, until it reached the edge of a yawning chasm, into which it plunged with every appearance of deafening roar. Out of the seething abyss came clouds of mist, and the sunlight smiting through them painted the morning and evening glories. Just by the edge of the chasm the artist had painted a tree. On the tree was a limb that was wet with the spray that broke over it. On the limb was a nest, and in the nest a bird, calmly sitting on her eggs; while near at hand was her mate, with beak wide apart, as if singing one of his sweetest songs. "That," said the artist, is *my* idea of peace."

We rest in Christ, not because He shields us from every storm that sweeps in fury over the sea of life, for he does not do that; but because in the storm He holds us and puts into our souls a song of peace.

The fullness of God is the fullness of life. There must be a fountain of life somewhere. Spontaneous generation is one of the exploded humbugs of the nineteenth century. It is the eternal law of biology that life comes only from life. The universe is full

of life—multiplex, multiform, and glorious. That makes it necessary that there shall be an infinite fountain of life somewhere. There is such a fountain. It is God. "In Him we live and move and have our being." The fullness of life will bring glorious results.

Life has in it the possibility of growth. The diamond can never be anything more than it is because it is a dead thing. It belongs to the kingdom of the inorganic. It may become something less than it is now, but it never can be anything greater. The tiny plant that came from the heart of the acorn will be vastly more than it is because it is a living thing. As we are filled with the fullness of God we are filled with the fullness of life. That means that we shall be infinitely more than we are now. Paul was right when he said, "Now I know in part, then I shall know even as also I am known; now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." I am a living soul. That means an infinite destiny.

And the goal of the best shall be reached; for, in the second place, life has power to realize the perfection of its type. Every living thing struggles to realize its type. I stand here, in the morning sunlight, with the egg of a lark in my hand and say: "If you will put this egg under the breast of the

mother bird, where the warmth of her bosom may bring the germ that is in it to perfection, a birdling will one day come from this shell. If favorable conditions attend, and it is allowed to grow to maturity, there will come a morning in the springtime when the full-grown bird will spring from its own nest in the meadow, and, shaking the dewdrops from its wings, soar upward, singing so sweet a song that every pilgrim will pause to listen. When you say to me, "Tell us how you dare make such a prophecy," I answer, "It is the egg of a lark, and Nature has stamped upon every living thing the eternal law, 'Life forever struggles to approximate its type.'"

The type of our life is the divine. John has this law in mind when he says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Sons of men who are treading the path of life with bleeding feet, look up and rejoice! It is an eternal law of nature that life is forever energizing to approximate its types. If you know the love of Christ, you will be filled with the fullness of God. That means that you will be filled with the fullness of the divine life. So filled you can not fail. You

must come to be like Him. You will come to the best.

In the gallery of fine arts in Paris you may find a piece of very beautiful statuary. It has a history that will emphasize this superlative truth. For years an old artist worked on the model, done in clay, with painstaking care. At last it was complete, and a great joy filled his soul. That very night a cold northeast wind swept over Paris. The old man could think only of his model. As the cold stole into his gloomy quarters he said to himself, "If the moisture in the clay is allowed to freeze, the beautiful perfection of my model will be ruined." With the devotion of an idolater, he arose and piled all the clothing and bedding at his command upon the image that was the pride of his heart and the work of the years. The next morning the old man came not to breakfast at the appointed time. His friends sought him to find him stiff and stark. He had been frozen to death, but he had saved the image. It must be your supreme business to save the image of the divine at any cost. The path to that goal is given in the text. If you know the love of Christ you will be filled with all the fullness of God. That will give you power to approximate the divine type and save the image of infinite perfection.

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